



# THE TRUE STORY OF FATIMA

JOHN DE MARCHI

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# **The True Story of Fatima**

**John de Marchi, I.M.C.**

## Introduction

Through no gift of the author's, but by the divine power, this is one of the very great stories of modern times. The remarkable events occurring near Fatima, Portugal, in the months from May to October, 1917, gain significance and new meaning with every passing day; the friends and followers of Our Lady of Fatima, for whom this volume speaks, increase each year by numberless legion in prayerful certitude that what we are revealing here is true.

The author is a witness to this truth, having lived at Fatima for many years, and this plain book's pretension to importance is that it is able to present for the first time to Americans the full and documented background against which God has written His own prescription for peace.

Much of this account is lovely and can be counted on to fulfill almost anyone's story—book expectations, as it tells of the shepherd children, Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco. But it is also a divinely serious narrative recalling, to the likely discomfort of many, the reality of Heaven and Hell, and bringing to necessary attention other primary matters too often and too long placed out of mind. It is hoped that this book, in its completeness, will provide a kind of text on Fatima, and the author feels obliged, in the face of such ambition, to list the documents on which it has been based.

I have used the Portuguese newspapers of the period, especially the Seculo, the Diario de Noticias, and the Mundo, all at the time important pro-government journals, anticlerical in both policy and tone. They describe the drama of the reported apparitions from a purely secular, non-religious point of view, giving a graphic, if at times a somewhat tongue-in-cheek coloration to those initial pilgrimages to the field called the Cova da Iria, near Fatima, when it was first alleged that the Mother of God had appeared to three peasant children. It is worth noting that the Catholic Press at this time was hardly less skeptical.

A considerable portion of this book is based on the writings of the Portuguese priest, Dr. Manuel Formigao, whose first work on the subject, entitled *Os Episodios Maravilhosos de Fatima* (The Marvelous Events of Fatima), appeared in 1921. It is a faithful, painstaking account of the good priest's many interviews with the children, and of the impression they made upon him.

In 1919, when Bishop Jose Alves Correia da Silva took possession of the newly restored diocese of Leiria, embracing, among other mountain villages, the parish of Fatima, he set up without delay a canonical inquiry into the apparitions, and the most important testimony supplied in the succeeding months and years were these.

The interrogations of the three children by their local pastor, Father Manuel Ferreira, after each of the apparitions from June to October, 1917. These interviews had been carefully recorded by Father Ferreira at the time, and provided a most valuable reference. It should perhaps be mentioned that the puzzled pastor, while performing this chore for posterity, did not believe in the apparitions.

The official canonical questioning of Lucia followed in 1924. New information broadened the picture. A letter written to his fiancée by Dr. Carlos Mendes on September 8, 1917, was helpful.<sup>[1]</sup> Many other witnesses appeared, testifying with amazing consistency to the human, if not the supernatural drama, described in this book. Lucia, during these years of close investigation, had entered the College of Vilar, at Oporto, Portugal, which was directed by the Congregation of Dorothean Sisters. Later she joined their community at Tuy, Spain, and it was here, as a lay sister, that she wrote her memoirs in obedience to the orders of the bishop of Leiria. One could not possibly overvalue these documents, which are four in number and were written in 1936, 1937, 1941 and 1942. The first of her memoirs is mainly a biography of her beloved cousin, Jacinta, granting to a serious student only the barest reference to the apparitions.

In the second of her memoirs we first find a detailed account of a supernatural experience, and then, almost casually, in 1937, a first reference to the apparitions of the angel. After twenty years of total silence, this particular revelation did not fall lightly, but rather like a bomb.

Lucia's third memoir was richer still. From it many new facts emerge, among them a reference to the famed aurora borealis of January 25, 1938, which in her own view was the sign preceding the outbreak of the second World War, foretold by Our Lady in the apparition of June, 1917.

Finally, having been ordered by the bishop to set down a definitive and complete account of everything she remembered, Sister Lucia, on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of that same year, 1942, after imploring the grace to write with precision and exactitude, began the fourth and most extensive of her memoirs, including all the circumstances and all the details of the apparitions of the angel as well as the more celebrated visits of Our Lady to the Cova da Iria in 1917.

It might seem that such abundant assistance from the one most qualified to

speak would have been sufficient for a critical history of the apparitions. Yet there still remained some points of obscurity that prompted a series of interviews with Sister Lucia by serious students of Fatima.

Unquestionably the one marked virtue of the book you are about to read is that it has been checked for truth and exact detail by Lucia, the surviving seer of Fatima, who is today (having transferred from the Dorothean Order) a Carmelite nun, and it appears almost certainly destined to be a saint of God. She is the author's friend, and she has walked with him in that blessed countryside where once, within the lifetime of so many of us now living, she talked with Mary, the Mother of God.

In writing this book, the author enjoyed the incomparable privilege of living at Fatima from 1943 until 1950, and for this reason was able to question at undisturbed length the most important eyewitnesses to the great events of 1917. I would like to express my gratitude to all of the many who helped me.

In these pages you will meet Senhor Manuel Pedro Marto, the father of Jacinta and Francisco, who will be known throughout the text as Ti Marto.<sup>[2]</sup> He's a sweet old man whose health, like an old mahogany tree, has conquered the years. Living with him still, and my valued friend, is his wife, Olimpia. Others among my friends and collaborators are Senhora Maria dos Anjos, the eldest sister of Lucia; her sisters, Carolina and Gloria, and lastly, among my most indispensable assistants, Senhora Maria Carreira, known in these pages as Maria da Capelinha, or Mary of the Chapel, who died in March of 1949. Still living, and holding me in his debt, is her son John, at present the sacristan of the Chapel of the Apparitions.

It was through these good people, more than through books, that I came to know the true flavor and the undercurrents of the real Fatima story. For instance, every Sunday, for six consecutive months, after he had recited his Rosary at the shrine, old Ti Marto would come and talk with me of his Jacinta and Francisco. Certainly he never spoke of them as saints, nor with a penny's worth of pious posturing. He would just talk of the children he had fathered and loved, and in a very practical, non-sentimental way, of other characters who populate this book, of the parish priest "... his reverence, who didn't believe and didn't want the rest of us to believe"; of the mayor-administrator, a valid villain in those distant days, still living, and perhaps improving, but toward whom Ti Marto in his charity holds no bitterness. These and other subjects he would pursue with great and scrupulous care for the truth. "We must not exaggerate, Father, nor squeeze out of this anymore than is really there," he would caution me.

Rarely does Ti Marto hear a chapter or a passage read from a book on Fatima without either correcting some small detail, or else adding a helpful note. "It

wasn't exactly like that!" he will interrupt, and then go on with a calm resume of what really occurred. When I asked him if he did not feel a certain pride in being father to such privileged children as Jacinta and Francisco, the old man sincerely shrugged this distinction away. "Our Lady just happened to choose this part of the world," he said, "when she could well have appeared to others. They just happened to be mine, that's all."

It is very possible that Ti Marto's narratives may contain some slight confusions and mistakes. Indeed, to claim a kind of infallibility for this good old man would be absurd. Yet I can assure you that to the best of his ability he has been accurate, and I can further testify that everything I have been able to check with independent witnesses supports him. In this respect the distinguished work on Fatima by the German priest, Dr. Luis Fischer, *Die Botschaft unserer lieben Frau von Fatima*, underscores the memory and reliability of Ti Marto. A professor at Hamburg University, Dr. Fischer visited Fatima some seventeen years ago to investigate the facts and to write his own scholarly account. Reading it now, we find no contradiction between his testimony and that of Ti Marto. More remarkably, however, we find the same hesitation and difficulty over small and unclarified details, the same words giving trouble—eloquent testimony, it seems to me, that where memory or detail have defeated Ti Marto, no compulsion to be a prophet or an expert has tempted him to gloss over these difficulties. Of his wife Olimpia, of Maria dos Anjos, of Senhora Carreira and the others, I can say the same.

Now it should be kept in mind that most of these good people are illiterate, and entirely subject to what they hear. Suspecting that their own experiences might well have blended through the years with things they had heard, I was alert to detect any mixture of fact and legend. The truth is that none of them, even the older ones, have tripped into confusion between their own personal experiences and what has recently come to light through Lucia's memoirs. When questioned about these new disclosures, the invariable reply was simply, "I know nothing of that." And yet, of course, it would have been so natural for certain suggestive processes to have been set in motion by all the recent disclosures of the children's private penances, their heroic sanctity, the apparitions of the angel, and other matters. "We knew nothing of these things," Ti Marto declares. "Nothing about the cords they wore to bed, nor about their going without food in the fields, Father... nothing, nothing. Even after the apparitions of Our Lady, I always thought that the children were very little different from other children."

But as time and accruing evidence make manifestly clear, there occurred in Fatima in 1916-1917 a series of great supernatural events. Three small children saw an angel three times, and they received Eucharistic Communion from his

hands. The Virgin Mother of Jesus Christ appeared to them at least six times, and spoke with them as a friend and mother, and confided to them a secret of universal interest and importance.

But what of this child, Lucia, now grown to womanhood, upon whose disclosures so much of this story depends? What is she like? What, indeed, must anyone be like, who is confidante to the Queen of Heaven? Ethereal? Wispy in nature? Soft and white as angel cake? A little bit crazy?

The mature Lucia is my friend. She has an absolutely normal personality and is as real as a plate of cookies. As this book will make clear, she is neither gifted nor beautiful by the usual standards, and if I were obliged to point out her outstanding natural characteristic I would say it was her gaiety. No one has been able to detect in her the least sign of morbid temperament or exclusive self-concern. Her daily life, by the testimony of her superiors, presents nothing singular.

"She is an eminently practical religious," I have been told. "The negation, we may say, of poetic idealism."

Actually, I can testify that the impression of nearly everyone who meets Lucia for the first time is one of disappointment, since we are all so impatiently eager to detect some trace of a halo or else to presuppose some other strange mark of the supernatural. In Lucia, if in anyone, the idea of pseudo-mysticism must be rejected.<sup>[3]</sup> Her manner of speech and of expression, whether by the spoken word, or her handwriting, which is certainly commonplace, all testify to complete psychological balance and a mentality entirely free from odd neuroses. To my utter belief in Lucia as a truthful witness, I feel obliged to add the acuteness of her memory, a faculty I have tested numerous times. I recommend her to your complete confidence.

Now what of Fatima, the place, which has become in recent years one of the great shrines of Christendom? Knowing well that in Europe there are shrines as old as the footprints of the apostles, we must realize that Fatima, against this ancient calendar, is almost new. It belongs to our era and it treats of our problems, as the following chapters will disclose. Yet Fatima, the modern shrine, holds a look of great age, resting as it does in the timeless hills of a people whose pedestrian culture was old before America, as a nation, was ever born.

The village is small. Except in times of special pilgrimage it is likely that its population could be loosely lodged in a large New York hotel. The pilgrim in pursuit of quaintness will most certainly be rewarded. He will find donkeys and oxen moving around with calm assurance, and observe among the people customs far older than anyone's memory. The pilgrim will see ladies walking barefoot on their country paths with queenly straightness, all the while

supporting on their casual coiffures jugs of wine that well might test a strong man's back, or oranges in heaps that you would not at first believe. Fittingly enough, it resembles a movie set done with Hollywood thoroughness, with the script ripped boldly from a Bible history book.

There must be some reason then, why Fatima, which appears as undisturbed a place as any in the western world, has been able to draw to itself on certain days more pilgrims than have ever crowded, as excess population, the city of Rome itself—with Rome's great treasures, glories, and long tradition as the heart and mind of the Church. A million people (a number equal to one-seventh of the total Portuguese population) have assembled within and about the rocky field near Fatima that is known as the Cova da Iria.

There are no hotel accommodations nor any other shelter for those who come to Fatima at these extraordinary times. There is only this open field and the surrounding slopes of the simple countryside to provide a resting place. Customarily, on these few great occasions, the pilgrims arrive the night before the scheduled devotions. Often it has rained the length of the night, as though to test the fiber of the faithful. It seems fair enough, on the evidence, to say that Christian devotion has never in modern times exceeded the fervor of these demonstrations in the Cova da Iria on the thirteenth day of May or October in any of recent years.

There are not many striking or ornamental sights to see. At Fatima the edifice of greatest interest is perhaps the least of the structures there. This is the Chapel of the Apparitions—simple, surely inexpensive, and likely enough no larger than your living room at home. Its glory exists in nothing but the events it commemorates. The lone touch of grandeur at the Cova da Iria will be found in the great basilica that has risen above the humble land. This is a crowning structure in the manner of the Italian Renaissance, stately and reverent in its setting, and built of the stone, the labor, and the love these hills have returned to their Lady for the visits she paid them less than 40 years ago.

In the classic pattern of great Catholic shrines, remarkable and documented cures have been effected at Fatima. People seem either unduly devoted to miracles or else made furious by stories concerning them, but a great shrine without miracles would be to many like a song that lacked a lyric.

There is clinical certainty that at Fatima the blind have had sight restored, while men and women stretcher-borne have risen from their litters to cry hosannas to the Power that can in one moment banish cancer, loosen the fist of the tightest paralysis, or render whole and clean the shrunken lungs of abandoned tuberculars. More than a hundred contradictions of the natural physical law have been registered at Fatima, and held to be valid only after the

most exhaustive and scrupulous examination of all available evidence. The author has himself been present at many miraculous cures, but to those who do not require the spangles of visible prodigy to know that God is in His Heaven, the spiritual message of Fatima remains of infinitely greater importance.

The true meaning of Fatima is that God has spoken to us through Mary, the Blessed Mother of His Son. We should pause long enough to reflect that it is not strange for God to speak to us, since He loves us far more than the best of us loves Him. Through all human history He has given His counsel to the conduct of our lives, His light to our doubts, and finally, through Calvary, the blood of His only-begotten Son as a ransom for our sins. Angels and prophets and saints have spoken for Him, but the most glorious of His messengers has been Mary.

At Fatima the world has received, through Mary, God's own prescription for peace. As to another Bethlehem, all hope and charity are carried in her to the lonely Portuguese hills, and to the shepherd children, Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco, whose total and wonderful story I am privileged to tell.

John de Marchi, I.M.C.



# CHAPTER 1

## The Fatima Children

### *Lucia*

Within the parish of Fatima, which is itself a small and modest place, there is a little hamlet called Aljustrel, and to find a less pretentious part of the world, you would probably need an angel for a guide. It is in the precise geographical center of Portugal, some say, though I have never measured it. Actually it is a group of aged and whitewashed houses, some detached and others joined, that tumble at a slight grade down a rocky lane where donkeys and sheep are happy, and an automobile, to proceed in peace, would require the gearing of a goat. It is little different now from the days of 1917, when it was the home of the three little children to whom Our Lady appeared.

These children were ordinary, by all the fair accounts of those who knew them best. They were not conspicuous for their gifts or their shortcomings.

Lucia Santos was older than her little cousins, Francisco and Jacinta. She was born on March 22, 1907, in the last of these whitewashed houses on the left-hand side of the descending road. She was the youngest of seven children born to Maria Rosa and Antonio Santos (sometimes called "The Pumpkin").[\[4\]](#) Lucia had never been exactly pretty, either as a child or as an adult. Scrubbed and posed and supplied with a halo, she could neither then nor now fulfill the holy-picture concept of a flowering saint. As a child, her features were blunt, her eyes alone being luminous and soft. Her lips were too thick and her nose was too flat. Her eyebrows, black as crepe, appeared to form one horizontal line.

Yet Lucia was gay and bright and loved by other children. Her lightness of spirit gave a shine to the dull facade and managed most times to chase the gloom away and out of sight. It was less a redeeming factor in her personality than it was a dividend of goodness. And if, as has been our privilege, you were able to meet and to know the adult Lucia, one note of her personality would ring above the rest—her gladness.

This story of Fatima treats of Lucia in her years of childhood and early adolescence. We know a great deal about her, not only from her memoirs and the

gracious help she has herself supplied, but in the endless testimony of living people who knew her well and loved her more. These documents are abundant, and throughout the text we will quote them with exact fidelity. Lucia's oldest sister, Maria dos Anjos (which means Mary of the Angels), is a plain woman, middle-aged, as practical as a loaf of bread, and herself a stranger to angels. She recalls her sister with quiet and non-rehearsed affection:

We loved her because she was so intelligent and affectionate (Maria has told us). Even when she had grown to the age of ten and was believed old enough to be trusted with the flocks, she would run to my mother and sit on her lap to be cuddled and kissed. We who were older used to tease her and say, "Here comes the cuddler!"—and we would even be cross with her when we felt it was overdone. But it made no difference. It would be the same the next day. You should have seen her when my first baby was born. She came home from the fields and locked up the sheep and ran as fast as her legs would carry her to my house, which was just across the street from my mother's house. She clutched at the baby and covered it with kisses, not at all like the others around here who thought a baby was just a baby.

Lucia loved children and they adored her. Sometimes a dozen or so of them would collect in our yard and Lucia would be perfectly happy just decorating these little ones with flowers and leaves. She would make little processions with make-believe saints, arranging flowers and thrones and singing hymns to Our Lady, just as if they were all in a church. I can still remember the ones she liked best. (Here Maria dos Anjos hummed a well-known Portuguese hymn to our Lady.) And she would finish the hymn by giving the "blessing." She knew so well how to look after children that the mothers used to leave their little ones at our house when they went out to work.

No one could beat Lucia at games. She was always the organizer. The children used to hide under the fig trees and in the bushes or under the beds—anywhere, and when they were all tired from their games they would sit in the shade of the fig trees and listen to Lucia tell stories which never, never seemed to have an end.

It is certain that Lucia was gay and content as a child, not only from the testimony of those who lived with her and grew up with her, but from her own self-possessed and unfaltering recollections. After twenty-five years in a convent, she was able, at the bishop of Leiria's firm request, to recall and document in her own hand the least details of childhood—the dances, the games, the moods of other children, the brightness of costumes, festively, proudly worn. Piety of a melancholy strain never touched Lucia sufficiently to erase the natural delight she found in costuming and fancy frills.

There is evidence that Lucia as a child was somewhat supercharged with dancing energy and an inclination to jabber endlessly. Her uncle, the good and patient Manuel Marto, does not indict her for this perpetual motion of lip and limb, he merely states it to have been so. He was fond of her, and recalls her depths of affection. She called him "Father."

"It was all the time 'Father do this' and 'Father do that'" Senhor Marto recalls. "She was full of mischief and I used to think she would either be very good or very bad."

Lucia's home life was orthodox. Her mother, Maria Rosa, was a plain, industrious, unpampered woman who permitted no nonsense. The guiding hand in the house was matriarchal, due perhaps to Antonio Santos's frequent lapses in religious practice, and his surrenders to thirst. Maria Rosa worried over her husband's bad example to their children, and was an aggressive champion of virtue in a very literal and sometimes muscular way. But of her devotion and fidelity to the teachings of the Church there is no doubt. Maria dos Anjos has attempted to describe her mother's approach to their spiritual growth during those early years.

Our mother knew how to read printed words but could not write. Every night during the winter she used to read us some part of the Old Testament or the Gospels, or some story of Our Lady of Nazare or Lourdes. I dearly remember her saying to Lucia at the time of the apparitions: "Do you think that because Our Lady appeared in Nazare and in Lourdes that she has to appear to you?"

In Lent we knew that readings would be about the Passion of Our Lord. Afterwards Lucia would give her own account to the other children. Mother taught us doctrine, and would not let us go and play until we knew it properly by heart. She did not want to feel ashamed, she said, when the parish priest examined us. And she had no need to be, for the priest was very pleased with us and even when we were quite small, he allowed us to teach other children in the church. I could not have been more than nine when he made me a catechist.

Mother was never satisfied with our just being able to repeat the words of our catechism. She tried hard to explain everything so we would really understand the meaning of the words. She used to say that just repeating catechism without understanding was worse than useless. We used to ask her all kinds of questions and it seemed that she explained them even better than the priest in church. One day I asked her how it was that the fire of Hell did not destroy the damned like the wood in the fire. She asked us if we had ever noticed how a cone cast into a fire could seem to burn and burn without being destroyed. This rather frightened us, and we made firm resolutions not to sin and fall into that fire ourselves.

But it was not only to us that mother taught catechism. Other children and

even grown-ups used to come to our house for lessons.

All through May, as well as in the month of the Holy Souls, we said the family Rosary at home by the fireside, and when we went out with the flocks our mother would always remind us to take our beads with us. "Remember," she would tell us, "to say your beads to Our Lady after lunch, and then some Our Fathers to St. Anthony, so the sheep will not get lost."

My mother always insisted that we be home by nightfall, no matter what the occasion. Days of fiesta made no difference because, with her, the supper hour was sacred. She wanted us to be humble and hard-working and truthful. The least little lie would mean the broom handle for us.

From the beginning mother taught us to love the Church, and especially the Blessed Sacrament. In those days first Holy Communion was not made until children were about ten years old, and we had to know our doctrine well. But Lucia made her first Communion when she was six. And I can still remember how happy mother was, and what a fiesta we had at home![5] It is clear then—and very clear, that Senhora Santos was a champion of sound doctrine. Her conformity seems to have been rigid, sincere, and touched with her personal gloom. She displayed, for instance, undeviating faith in all pronouncements by Father Manuel Ferreira, the parish priest at Fatima, who one day declared that dancing, indulged in beyond the threshold of the home, was a sinful exercise that made the devil jig with glee. This was uncomfortable news to Maria Rosa and her nimble daughters, none of whom enjoyed the happy practice more than Lucia. But once proscribed by the parish priest, that was the end of the dancing. Lucia, after long years in the convent, seems still to be puzzled by this local interdict:

Someone asked my mother how it was that up to that time dancing had not been considered a sin, but with the coming of the new priest had become one. My mother replied, "I don't know, but the Reverend Father does not want dancing; that is clear; so my daughters will not go to dances. They can dance a little at home because the Reverend Father says that in the family it is not wrong to dance."

For Maria Rosa the voice of the priest was in all things the voice of the Lord. This unvarying confidence in the judgments of Father Ferreira may to some degree explain her long and stubborn reluctance to concede that the Mother of God could have appeared to the likes of Lucia. Father Ferreira vehemently denied any possibility of the apparitions being true, and suggested to Senhora Santos that the violent nonsense in her young daughter's head could be of diabolic inspiration. This judgment surely did not assist any flood of sympathy in Senhora Santos for the tearful and tender pleadings of her little girl: "Mama—

believe me!" Maria Rosa, who knew the letter of the law so unerringly, would rather have met a monster than a lie.

"It was only after the apparitions," Maria dos Anjos has since declared, "that the trouble began in our family."

### ***Francisco and Jacinta***

Francisco Marto and his little sister, Jacinta, were Lucia's first cousins. They lived up the road a bit on that rocky and dusty lane that leads through Aljustrel. They were the sixth and seventh children of their good and durable parents, Manuel Pedro Marto and his wife, Olimpia, who became and have remained the warm, valued friends of the author of this book.

We first met Manual Marto in 1943, when brought to his house by Father Carlos de Azevedo, the director of the publication, Voz da Fatima. We got to Aljustrel by walking through fields that in proper season cry out with beauty, but have always been poor and stubborn under that gay dress of flowers worn in summer. What fertility these acres possess was gained the hard way, by the sweat of toiling peasants through succeeding generations. When the Lord sends rain there is a harvest of wheat for June, and in September the land yields back to the worker a fair measure of maize, and grapes for making wine. The olive groves are treasured for the oil they give, and there are the sheep. These things together provide the total and uncomplicated economy of this mountain range, or serra as it is called.

Father Carlos led us past several cottages to one that was hardly different from the rest. These dwellings, almost always of sun-stained stucco, are one story high, and to modern, metropolitan eyes would at first glimpse, suggest all the comforts of an abandoned mineshaft. The neighborhood lacks, in a loose order of its under-privilege: plumbing, electricity, central heating, refrigeration, television, radios and, except in modest and occasional amounts, cash-money. The people here are neither gadget-blest nor gadget-bound, but sufficient to the tasks and needs of every day and, consequently, free. To sympathizers they would likely say: weep for yourselves.

A group of children (probably relatives) were playing in front of Ti Marto's house that afternoon in 1943. Since it wasn't Sunday, they were shoeless, and by late afternoon as efficiently filmed with earth as young potatoes rooted from the field. Father Carlos asked one of them, "Is Ti Marto home?"

"Yes, Father."

But Senhor Marto had already heard us and had come to the gate. "Come in

—please do," he said to Father Carlos. In the Portuguese custom he leaned to kiss our hands, then led us into his straw-strewn yard. "I was just going with the donkey to get some firewood," he explained.

Senhor Marto is a spry and ancient gentleman who gets around. He was past seventy then, and is past eighty now, yet the chances are fine that he will still outlive whatever donkey is currently toting the wood. He is a lean and straight-standing man whom work has fibred like an old stalk of asparagus. He is sincere and kind, and as modest as a prayer should be. Like most of the working people on the serra he can neither read nor write, yet is an intelligent and learned man. A stranger to books, he does not know the intellectual fashions or those choking deposits of pride that erudition too often leaves in the minds and spirits of men who have believed themselves to be in chaste pursuit of God. As a priest, I have been astonished and humbled by his knowledge of theology. Do not ask me how it came to him, but do believe that in the things that matter most he speaks with the clarity of a St. Paul, as though the lightning of the Lord had struck him, too. This is Marto, the father of Francisco and Jacinta. In this story he will be our witness many times.

On my first visit to Ti Marto's house I was welcomed into the parlour or living room. It is humble here but not without comfort and a certain abiding charm. It is dominated by the hearth that heats the house when heat is required, and where, at all times of the year, the cooking is done. There are some adornments. A table along one wall holds a variety of religious objects. There are pictures, chief among them a likeness of Pius XII, his hand raised in fatherly blessing to the people of this house.

Ti Marto called from the parlour, "Wife—come here; Father Carlos has brought a priest from Rome."

Senhora Olimpia came in. She moves rather briskly, and she is lively and spirited, and a few years older than her husband. She was the widowed mother of two children before she married Ti Marto, and had seven more by him. She came bearing a great heap of grapes, fresh-picked for her visitors, and a basin of water and a towel for the washing of our hands.

"Please eat the grapes," she said; "we do not need them. Neither my husband nor I drink wine." She looked at Ti Marto in pleased appraisal, as though this were a virtue we would not trip over very often. "Sometimes on Sunday," she explained, "he stays talking in the village, but he never goes into a tavern."

"I would like to hear about your Francisco and your Jacinta," I said.

We began to talk, as we have talked a great deal ever since. This is not an embellished story, but a restrained and honest one, told with love and in good conscience by people who have been very close to God.

## *Francisco*

It seems agreed by all who remember Francisco Marto that he was a handsome boy, and photographs confirm this. The one or two that have been most published present him at his slick and Sunday best in an outfit almost dudish. The boy's glance at the camera in these pictures appears solemn.

Sister Lucia, the surviving seer of Fatima, in her accounts of him reports that unlike his spirited sister, Jacinta, with her capacity for frolic and self-assertion, Francisco at the age of nine was such a calculating and determined pacifist that a lack of courage would appear to be the only explanation. He was devoted to games and the company of other children, yet by Lucia's testimony was without any appetite for the routine conflicts and tests of will that go with children's games. He was either indifferent to his personal rights or unwilling to defend them. When he was robbed of a treasured possession, Lucia recalls, he would not even protest.

Once each year, we are told, there was glad commotion in Aljustrel when Lucia's, Francisco's, and Jacinta's godmother Teresa made her annual trip to the seacoast. There's evidence that this good lady must have been godmother to everyone in sight and faithfully remembered to return from her journeys with a gift for each child she had sponsored. One of her gifts to Francisco was a lovely handkerchief on which was stamped the image of Our Lady of Nazare. He prized it dearly and displayed it with pride among his friends. But a tragic thing occurred. His precious handkerchief was pirated by one of his companions. Investigation followed. Faithful friends went sleuthing, and the culprit was revealed. But on Francisco's part there was no call to arms. "Let him keep it," he said; "I do not mind." He gave way easily and, it is said in further accusation, with a smile. Lucia has confessed that his docility and habitual yielding inspired her less than it annoyed her:

He would play with all the children without showing preference, and he never quarreled. But if something happened that he did not like, he would sometimes leave the game. If asked why he left, he would reply, "Because you're bad," or simply, "Because I want to." And although he tried his best at games, he was dull to play with because he almost always lost. His peaceful temperament sometimes used to get very much on my nerves. If I ordered him to sit on a stone, he would meekly do so, as if I had to be obeyed. Later I would be sorry for my impatience and go to him, and he would always be as friendly as if nothing had happened.

The softness of his nature is confirmed by Ti Marto who recalls that Francisco was an affectionate, obedient boy and rarely, if ever, an obstacle in the

path of family discipline. But Ti Marto fails to agree with Lucia that he was a thornless personality at home, or a timid defender of his interests. He also dissents from Lucia's view of Francisco's and Jacinta's comparative courage. This is the view of Ti Marto:

He was more courageous than Jacinta. He didn't always have as much patience, and often, for small reason, he would run around like a young bull calf. He was anything but a coward. He would go out at night, alone in the dark, without a sign of fear. He played with lizards and snakes and would roll them around a stick and make them drink out of holes in the rocks. Fearlessly he hunted hares and foxes and moles.

Senhora Olimpia recalls Francisco's talent for capturing lizards and other portable wildlife that are unpopular indoors. She says that his habit was to bring these specimens into the house while her own inclination was to sprint for safety. She marveled then at the boldness of her son, and today states with certainty that he was never afraid. Francisco was also devoted to practical jokes that carried the risk of strong reprisal, such as dropping odd and inedible items into the open mouth of his sleeping brother John, and prior to the apparitions, his parents attest, he had once or twice refused to say his prayers, in a rebellious mood that Ti Marto was quick to correct.<sup>[6]</sup>

But kindness appears to have been a controlling trait. He gave warmth and pity to all the creatures of earth. Once, it is known, he paid the great price of the only penny he possessed, or was for some time likely to acquire, to purchase freedom for a bird another boy held captive. The actual plundering of a nest filled him with horror. Music thrilled him, and he is said to have been adept at coaxing tunes from a reed pipe, in accompaniment to which both Jacinta and Lucia were happy to sing and to dance. Indications are strong that Francisco was a nice little fellow and, on the evidence, at nine years of age, neither a hoodlum nor a shining saint.

### *Jacinta*

Jacinta Marto was a lamb of the Lord, who remains the delight and living lesson of the Fatima story as it is known to date. Because Lucia loved her so, and has made her own earliest memoirs almost a sheer biography of her cousin (with the apparitions mentioned hardly at all), we have a heroine, small but complete, dainty yet brave, and as gay in the paths of sorrow and trial as only the saints can be.

She never grew much bigger than a plaster cherub, anyhow. She died when

she was not quite ten years old, already on speaking terms with actual angels, and with Mary, the Queen of the Kingdom. It was the running head-start to Heaven that Jacinta had clearly earned.

She was two years younger than Francisco, whom she resembled. Her prettiness was an asset that undoubtedly pleased her, and it was marked enough to prompt the special attention of her mother. Her expression was soft and her features exquisitely modeled. Her health was excellent; her energies endless; she flowed into motion with easy grace and dancing was one of her joys.

"She wasn't as plump as Francisco," her mother reports. "Her eyes were light in color and brighter than my own when I was young. She liked to have her hair tidy and I used to do it for her every day. A little jacket and a cotton skirt and shoes were what she wore each day, for I was always able to keep my children shod."

Jacinta's grasp on the affections of all who knew her is made clear by endless testimony. "She was a darling," her father still declares, "and none of the others could compare with her."

This is almost excessive praise from the just and moderate Ti Marto, whose inclination would not be to raise the prestige of a single child like a bright flag over the rest.

She was always gentle and sweet, and she was like that from the beginning. If she wanted anything she would let us know in her own way, or just give a tiny cry, and then no more trouble at all. When we went out to Mass, or for some other reason left the house, she did not mind. We never had to go through any nonsense because of her. She was naturally good and was the sweetest among our children. When her mother told her some little fib, such as that she was only going to the cabbage-patch, when she was really going much farther, Jacinta would always detect the deception and not hesitate to scold her own mother.

Such rectitude in a child of this age may seem smug to some, or to others suggest a precocious and self-conscious scold. But there is no reason to believe that this was so. Love worked in Jacinta like a motor—a sixteen cylinder apparatus in a very small body. There were countless targets for her affection—her family, her little friends, her sheep—but above all creatures (prior to the apparitions), she loved her cousin Lucia.

The three-year difference in their ages was no barrier to their friendship or freedom of communication. Their love was rare and undoubtedly touched with grace. Envy or competition did not exist between them, though Jacinta now and then moved out from under any premature halo long enough to pout and be unhappy when she was unable to possess each of her cousin's waking hours. When Lucia attained the age of ten and was assigned by her parents the daily

task of tending the family sheep, a crisis arose. For Lucia it meant a graduation from endless games with other children to responsible chores in sometimes distant pastures; and for Jacinta, held to village doorsteps, it meant a desolate loneliness that she was not at this age willing to bear. Olimpia Marto solved this problem by permitting Jacinta a few of their own flock to take along with Lucia. Jacinta's desire to praise and to please the older shepherdess is displayed in touching detail by Lucia's own testimony:

My cousin went one day with her mother to a first Communion ceremony at which tiny "angels" strewed flowers before the Blessed Sacrament. After that she would often leave us at our play to gather armfuls of flowers which she would throw at me in the same way. When I asked her why she did it, she said she was doing what the angels did.

By Lucia's account, the gospel stories and the personality of Jesus were in Jacinta's firm possession long before the apparitions raised the faith of these children to a status of angelic knowledge:

When she was five years old, or less, she would melt with tears on hearing the story of the Passion of Our Lord. "Poor Jesus," she would say. "I must never sin and offend Him more."

But in the rocky fields of the serra, Jacinta was happy. She had Lucia for the length of every day, and the sheep had become her precious friends. Out of her affection she gave them the choicest names her fancy could provide: "Dove" and "Star" and "Beauty" and "Snow."

She used to sit with them (Lucia says), holding and kissing them on her lap. At night she would attempt to carry a little one home on her shoulders to save it from tiredness, as in pictures of the Good Shepherd she had seen.

Flowers enchanted her. It was her habit to gather them in volume and myriad colors to festoon her hair with their brightness, and especially to make garlands for Lucia. Her aesthetic appetite was not only sharp but, for such a knee-high apprentice to the world's delights, voracious. She had a romantic label for all the natural beauties she was able to behold. The stars were to her "the angels' lanterns," and she would challenge Francisco to eye-crossing, sense-rocking contests in which they would attempt to count each one of them. The sun, casting soft light on the rough hills at the end of the day, was to Jacinta, "Our Lady's lamp."

Lucia says that her cousin's singing voice was sweet and that she was fond of perching on some high hill now and then so that her voice could echo in the valley.

"And the name which echoed best," says Lucia, "was Maria."

Dancing, of course, was an enterprise that flourished endlessly with both of

them, and according to Lucia, Jacinta brought to it a special talent and grace. All this is very nice, and very sweet; yet fairness requires those few descriptions by Lucia that reveal some moth bites in her little cousin's mantle of innocence. She could, at times, be disagreeable:

The least quarrel, when she was playing with other children, was enough to put her into a fit of the sulks. To make her return to the game it was not enough to plead and pet; she had to choose both game and partner.

Possessiveness was another fault in Jacinta, and her accustomed success at games, plus pampering, seem now and then to have shaken a little salt on the angels who hovered so near.

I was very upset with her (Lucia has said), because after a game of "buttons" I would have none on my dress when I was called home to meals. She nearly always used to win them from me, and this meant a scolding by my mother. But what could I do when, in addition to sulking, she would not give them back to me? Her plan was to have them ready for the next day's game without having to use her own. It was only by threatening not to play again that I managed to get them back.

Lucia's honest memoirs also provide an admission that in those early days prayer was not as popular as play:

We were told we must say our Rosaries after our lunch on the serra, but as the whole day seemed too short for prayer, we thought of a good way to get it done quickly. We simply said, "Hail Mary, Hail Mary," on each of the beads, and then, at the end of the decade, "Our Father," with a rather long pause. That way, in a very few minutes, the Rosary was off our minds.

Here then were the seers of Aljustrel—human and warm and somewhat less perfect than time and grace would permit them to become.

On those days when Francisco and Jacinta were allowed to join Lucia in taking the sheep to pasture, their mother would wake them to the darkness and the mountain chill preceding dawn. Still half asleep, they would mumble the required prayer of the day: "Praised be the ever holy Sacrament of the Eucharist...."

Senhora Olimpia remembers that they did not always respond with model devotion; they were much too groggy. "They used to make the sign of the cross," she explained, "and then say as much of the prayer as they could. Children of that age very soon get tired of praying."

This ultra-early rousing, of course, was not a calculated penance but a sound concession to the preference of the sheep for nibbling in pasture still fresh with the dew of the night.

While the children were dressing, Olimpia customarily produced for them a

breakfast of soup and chewy bread made moist with a splash of olive oil. There's no indication that the morning menu ever got much fancier. For lunch they would carry with them bread and olives and dried fish or sardines, supplemented with anything else the cupboard could provide. The aim of the children was not food, anyhow, but the company of Lucia and the gladness of the day.

Lucia would wait with her flock, and make the choice of pastureland. Sometimes she chose the fields near Fatima or those close by a village known as Moita. But best of all she liked a place called the Cabeco, where her family owned part of an olive grove. This was a pasture on a rise of land that overlooked their village, near home, and lumpy with odd-shaped stones. Grazing was good at the Cabeco, while the olive and pine trees gave pleasant shade when the heat of the day was high.

Other shepherds often joined them here at Lucia's invitation, the sheep to dine off the countryside, the children to play at their games. This mingling of flocks appears to have gone well enough, with never a crisis of ownership, since sheep, like puppies, or sociable cats, always know to whom they belong.

Consistent with her habit of leadership, Lucia was the organizer and leader of the games. Being then, as now, a combination of excellent humor and practical energy, her leadership stirred no resentment. It was natural, and it was encouraged by the dependence of the others. Time and again, not from Lucia's own testimony, but from the willing evidence her old companions provide, their affection for this markedly plain little girl is evident. A middle-aged housewife of Aljustrel, named Teresa Maitias, remembers happily the games they used to play:

Lucia was very amusing. She had a way of getting the best out of us so that we liked to be with her. She was also very intelligent, and could sing and dance and taught us to do the same. We always obeyed her. We spent hours and hours dancing and singing, and sometimes forgot to eat.

Besides the hymns we sang in church I remember one to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel that I still sing as I go about my work, and which all my children have learned.<sup>[7]</sup> (Here Senhora Teresa was happy to demonstrate with four verses and a chorus.) We sang folk songs, too, that I can't remember now, and the little boys used to play their pipes while we danced. Lucia's first direct experience of the supernatural—April / October of 1915 was not shared by Francisco or Jacinta. It was at a time that remains uncertain, though she was probably eight years old. Her own recollections set the event between April and October of 1915 and it must have occurred during one of her first assignments with the sheep. She was with three other girls who still remember, though in a kind of grey confusion, what happened that day on the slopes of the Cabeco.

Lucia's companions were Teresa Maitias, Teresa's sister, Maria, and a little girl named Maria Justino.

"We'd had our lunch," Lucia remembers, "and were just beginning the Rosary, when suddenly we saw, above the trees in the valley below us, a kind of cloud that was whiter than snow. It was transparent and in human form."

The exact emotional reactions of these children are not clear, and later awareness that the figure was an angel has not prompted them to color the event with imagination. The figure, or visitor, was vague, and admittedly did not etch itself very clearly in their minds.

One of the children reported home to her mother that she had seen something white on a tree and that it looked like a headless woman. This account was enough to raise some lively speculation, but it was a puzzle so beyond solution that, when curiosity had wearied, the problem was shrugged away. Twice again in the days that followed the same strange figure appeared to these children, leaving with Lucia a reaction she could neither describe nor explain.

"The impression slowly disappeared," she has said in this same memoir, "and I fully believe if it hadn't been for the events that followed, we'd have forgotten all about it."

## CHAPTER 2

### The Angel of Peace

#### *The First Visit*

A year or more passed. Lucia, now a veteran shepherdess, was an almost daily companion to Jacinta and Francisco. Only then did the angel appear with radiant clarity at the Cabeco. This was not a gauzy, uncertain citizen of paradise. Its identity was overpowering. Lucia confesses her complete inability to deal with the event in adequate words, but at least has tried her very best. This is her account of what happened in the spring of 1916:

We went on that occasion to my parents' property, which is at the bottom of the Cabeco, facing east. It is called Chousa Velha.

About the middle of the morning it began to drizzle and we climbed up the hill, followed by our sheep, in search of a rock that would shelter us. And so it was that we entered for the first time into that blessed place. It is in the middle of an olive grove that belongs to my godfather, Anastacio. From there one can see the village where I was born, my father's house, and also Casa Velha and Eira da Pedra. The olive grove, which really belongs to several people, extends as far as these places.

We spent the day there, in spite of the fact that the rain had stopped and the sun was shining in a clear sky. We ate our lunch and began to say the Rosary. After that we began to play a game with pebbles. We had only been at it a few moments when a strong wind began to shake the trees and we looked up to see what was happening, since it was such a calm day. And then we began to see, in the distance, above the trees that stretched to the east, a light whiter than snow in the form of a young man, quite transparent, and as brilliant as crystal in the rays of the sun. As he came near we were able to see his features. We were astonished and absorbed and we said nothing to one another. And then he said: "Do not be afraid. I am the angel of peace. Pray with me."

He knelt, bending his forehead to the ground. With a supernatural impulse we did the same, repeating the words we heard him say:

"My God, I believe, I adore, I hope, and I love Thee. I ask pardon for those

who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope, and do not love Thee."<sup>[8]</sup> After repeating this prayer three times the angel rose and said to us: "Pray in this way. The hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to the voice of your supplications." And he disappeared. He left us in an atmosphere of the supernatural that was so intense we were for a long time unaware of our own existence. The presence of God was so powerful and intimate that even among ourselves we could not speak. On the next day, too, this same atmosphere held us bound, and it lessened and disappeared only gradually. None of us thought of talking about this apparition or any pledge of secrecy. We were locked in silence without having willed it.

This silence was long maintained. The weight of mystery was on them heavily. Their games and songs and dances were begun again, but as though by a controlling plan they chose now to play less with other children, and to remain much more by themselves. It should be mentioned here that while Francisco witnessed and felt the power and glory of the angel, he did not hear what was said. Later, too, in all the apparitions that followed, the partial privilege of seeing and knowing but not hearing the words of Our Lady was to be his allotment.

When it is summer on the Serra da Aire, the sun of the middle day is merciless. It parches the hills and wilts nearly everything. The sheep are therefore pastured in the early and the late parts of the day. Always before noon they are returned to the sheep folds while the shepherds themselves find shade from the sun and ease from their morning tasks.

The children often spent these glaring hours in Lucia's garden where an old well rests in shade. The well in summer is covered by a great flat stone, since it is not spring-fed, but is rather a kind of catch-all, used to gather what water it can in the brief season of rain.

### ***The Second Visit***

The children liked to sit and play on the great rock covering the well, shaded by the laden limbs of fig, almond and olive trees. One day, in the time of siesta, the angel came to them again, and this is Lucia's account:

Suddenly we saw the same angel near us.

"What are you doing?" he asked. "Pray! Pray a great deal! The hearts of Jesus and Mary have designs of mercy for you. Offer unceasingly to the Most High prayers and sacrifices!"

"But how are we to sacrifice?" asked Lucia.

"Offer up everything within your power as a sacrifice to the Lord in an act of

reparation for the sins by which He is offended; and of supplication for the conversion of sinners. Thus invoke peace upon your country. I am her Guardian Angel; the Angel of Portugal. Above all, accept and bear with submission the sufferings that the Lord may send you."

Again Francisco, hearing nothing of what the angel had said, could hold his curiosity no longer than evening. "Lucia," he asked then, "what did the angel say?"

But Lucia was so stunned by the weight of the supernatural that she asked him please to wait another day, or else to ask Jacinta. But Jacinta, too, found herself not willing or prepared to repeat a word of the angel's message.

"Tomorrow I will tell you, Francisco," she said. "But I just can't talk about it tonight."

On the following day (relates Lucia), the first thing Francisco did was ask me, "Did you sleep last night? I was thinking all the time of the angel and what he could have said."

I then told him everything the angel had said in the two apparitions. But it seemed he did not understand all the words. "What is the Most High?" he asked. "What does it mean that the hearts of Jesus and Mary are attentive to your supplications?" And when I gave him the answer he remained thoughtful for a while before he began to ask other questions. But my own spirit was not yet free to talk of these things. I asked him once more to wait another day. He seemed content then to wait a little, but at the very first chance he was asking questions again, which caused Jacinta to say with some alarm, "Be careful; one should not talk about these things!"

It is strange, but when we talked about the angel, I cannot explain how it was that we felt. Jacinta said, "I don't know what it is that I feel. I can't talk or play or sing or anything."

"I can't either," Francisco said, "but it doesn't matter. The angel is better than anything. Let's think of him."

It was no problem to dwell on the angel. For days they were without capacity to think of anything else. The exhortation to "Pray... pray... offer your prayers and sacrifices to the Most High," did not register with them like some order or recommendation from a parent or a priest. Their senses were barely able to carry the weight of what had been said.

The words of the angel were like a light (Lucia has written), which made us understand who and what God really is—how He loves us and wishes to be loved. The value of sacrifice was for the first time clear. Suddenly we knew its appeal to God and its power to convert sinners. From that moment we began offering to Him all that mortified us, all that was difficult or unpleasant, except

that we did not then seek extra sacrifices and penances as we later learned to do. We did, however, spend hours and hours prostrated on the ground, repeating and repeating the prayer the angel taught us.

The summer passed and siesta times were over: Now the sheep were pastured in the fields the length of every day. The children understandably had become more thoughtful, their prayers habitual. One day, Lucia remembers, they led their flock from other fields to the slope of the Cabeco. And there by a strange, high-standing stone, they knelt to say first the Rosary, then the prayer the angel had taught them.

### ***The Third Visit***

While we were there (Lucia has testified), the angel appeared to us for the third time, holding in his hand a chalice, and above the Chalice, a Host, from which a few drops of Blood were falling. Leaving the Chalice and Host suspended in air, he prostrated himself on the ground and repeated three times this prayer:

"Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I adore Thee profoundly, and I offer Thee the Most Precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference by which He is offended. And by the infinite merits of His Most Sacred Heart and through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg the conversion of poor sinners."

Afterwards, he rose and took again the Chalice and the Host and gave the Host to me and the contents of the Chalice to Jacinta and Francisco, saying to them:

"Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men. Repair their crimes and console your God."

Once more he prostrated himself and repeated with us three times the prayer, "Most Holy Trinity... etc." He then disappeared. As in the other instances of the angel's appearance, exhaustion and the lock of silence held both little girls. Only Francisco, not having heard the angel, had a question to ask. "Lucia," he said, "I know the angel gave you Holy Communion, but what was it that he gave to Jacinta and me? "That was Communion, too, Francisco. Didn't you see the Blood that dropped into the Chalice from the Host?"

The little boy, rich with the Feast that was in him, seemed satisfied. "I knew that God was in me," he said, "but I didn't know exactly how." Then he knelt in love and thanksgiving to repeat and repeat the beautiful prayer of the angel.

Some feeling of impudence must invade any writer who attempts by himself to interpret the work of God. Yet it seems here so entirely clear that the angel, in addition to preparing the children for the spiritual privileges yet to come, undertook to demonstrate and underline for our theological health and guidance that the binding orthodoxies of the Church have not been vitiated by time or error. The centuries have left them undamaged. The frailties of all men, including the Church's membership, or even the sins and weaknesses of her priests, so often pointed at in triumph by the Church's enemies, have not chipped the Rock of Peter, nor diminished in any way the irreducible God who supplants the bread in the uplifted hands of any ordinary priest. The Trinity, the Eucharist, the Mass, the Rosary—all have been declared unnecessary trappings by dissenting Christians who, not through God's revelation, but by the fiat of rebellion, have chosen the wilderness of their own convenient interpretations. But here, at Fatima, it does appear that an angel has walked among us with a catechism open in his hands. Lucia has written:

I don't know why, but the apparitions of Our Lady produced in us effects quite different from the angel's visitations. We felt in both instances the same intimate happiness, peace and joy, but instead of the physical prostration the angel imposed, Our Lady brought a feeling of expansion and freedom; and instead of this annihilation in the divine presence, we wished only to exult in our joy. There was no difficulty of speech when Our Lady appeared; there was rather on my part a desire to communicate.

## CHAPTER 3

### 1st Apparition - May 13th

Any wise missionary, for good or for evil (and God is the wisest missionary of all), treasures for his cause the conversion and allegiance of children. The barriers to a child's credulity are usually in ratio to his limited frame of reference. His personality is like a huge house only occupied in part; a skilled adult may enter hand-in-hand with Christ, or else, by his own election, with any of several beguiling anti-Christians, have an excellent chance of settling down in comfortable residence there. This is one of the reasons why Jesus has so sternly and repeatedly warned us against giving scandal to children: He wants them for Himself.

God has set up an honest enterprise. His tap on the shoulder is an invitation but not a lease to paradise. He does not undermine this merit system by making angels of men. He does something fairer than that, and even more thrilling than that. He gives them a chance to become very much like Himself, or like His Mother, who is a person, and not an angel. The fulfillment of this opportunity is not easy; the ascent is invariably steep, with God providing the legs and the power, plus the free choice to climb or not to climb that rests with every man. But God does not make this decision for us. That is our own. And by His own rules there is not much else that God can do.

The children of Aljustrel, for instance, did not forget about the angel they had seen, but their zeal wore thin with the games and private interests that absorbed them in the winter months. Like Peter and James and John, who slept a stone's cast from their Master at Gethsemane, they had not yet been transformed into lovers of the cross.

On the Sunday before the Feast of the Ascension, the village people walked to the parish church at Fatima, some dutiful feet encased in shoes, and as many more unshod.

God preserved us (Jacinta and Francisco's aged mother still declares) from missing Mass on Sunday. We always went, and we brought the children, too, as soon as they were old enough to understand. Sometimes we had to go great distances to other villages, but whatever the weather, rain or shine, I can't

remember ever having missed Holy Mass—even when I had children at the breast. I used to get up early and leave everything to my husband who would go later. The only children we did not take were the toddling ones who could not know what was going on, or let you hear Mass properly yourself.

After Mass, with their lunch-bags packed, the children went off with their sheep to the pasture Lucia had chosen—a modest property her parents owned within a rough and rocky spread of land known as the Cova da Iria. They went leisurely along so the sheep could nibble at what random nourishment the roadside would provide. It was a vivid day, and very beautiful. In May-time, then as now, the fields near Fatima are unbelievably gay. The spring flowers bloom in such exaggerated and festive glory that any field you pass attracts the eye like an acre of Easter hats in our own more fashionable precincts. The sky on this wonderful Sunday was cloudless. The bells of the Fatima church were tolling as the sheep strolled into the field.

The children had lunch while their sheep were grazing. They had no expectation this would prove a day that millions would in time commemorate. Lunch was particularly good, with a Sunday dividend added by their mothers. Some of this they saved for later in the afternoon. They said grace and then a Rosary, as was their habit every day. After this they led the sheep to a fresh pasture, higher on the slopes of the Cova da Iria.

They began to amuse themselves by building a little house with odd-sized stones they picked from the field. Francisco was the architect and principal mechanic in this venture, his sister and cousin supplying the rough materials. Their party had just begun to go well, when they were startled by a vivid flash of light. They dropped the stones from their hands and looked about. They hadn't expected lightning on a day so fair, but lightning, whether logical or not, meant to them a thunderstorm. Yet the trees were still. There was no wind. The sky was blue as it had ever been.

"But it could mean a storm," Lucia said; "I think we'd better get ready to go home."

They began to gather their things and look to the sheep, when suddenly another flash of light, strange and unexplained, held them in speechless wonder. Without volition of their own, they walked a few steps forward, and then, as though compelled, they turned their heads to the right.

They saw a Lady, and she was so beautiful that they were never after able to describe her in terms they believed fitting to her radiance and glory. The Lady was young—no more than sixteen years old, and she appeared to be standing on the topmost fragile leaves of a small oak tree, looking down at them with tender interest.

It was a Lady (Lucia has written), clothed in white, and brighter than the sun, radiating a light more intense and clear than a crystal cup would be, were it filled with sparkling water and lit with burning sunlight.

"Don't be afraid," the Lady said to the children; "I won't hurt you."

She looked at them a bit sadly, as though to reproach their lack of confidence. Lucia responded to this reassurance. Politely, but directly, she addressed the Lady.

"Where are you from?"

"I come from Heaven," the Lady said.

This seemed to the children entirely reasonable. They knew of Heaven, both from their catechism and the visits of the angel. It simply was that they had never before been able to conceive that even Heaven could produce anyone as radiantly beautiful as the Lady standing before them. They gazed in rapture. The Lady wore a white mantle of breathless purity. It was edged with gold and fell to her feet. In her hands the beads of a rosary shone like stars, with its crucifix the most radiant gem of all. Still, Lucia felt no fear. The Lady's presence produced in her only gladness and confident joy.

"And what do you want of me?" Lucia was brave enough to ask.

"I want you to return here on the thirteenth of each month for the next six months, and at the very same hour," the Lady said. "Later I shall tell you who I am, and what it is that I most desire. And I shall return here yet a seventh time."

[9] Ah, but Heaven must be great indeed, thought Lucia, to send as lovely a creature as this. Its gifts and wonders had to be beyond all wild imagining.

"And shall I go to Heaven?"

"Yes, you will," the Lady said.

"And Jacinta?"

"She will go too."

"And Francisco?"

"Francisco, too, but he will first have many Rosaries to pray."

Here the Lady's beautiful and compassionate glance rested for a little while on Francisco, and for reasons we are not qualified to fathom, it held a shade of sadness and disapproval. Somewhere in his little heart the Lady must have read a fault that others could not see. In joy they beheld the Lady, while Lucia in her own mind was already populating paradise with friends. She remembered two of her companions who recently had died. And of the Lady then, in her charity, she anxiously asked:

"Is Maria Neves in Heaven?"

"Yes, she is."

"And Amelia?"

"She will be in Purgatory until the end of the world," the Lady said.

That was sad, thought Lucia. Her eyes filled with tears. She looked once again to the Lady, as though there might be something they could do for Amelia. The Lady then asked them a question that concerned not only Amelia, but all the sons and daughters of earth.

"Will you offer yourselves to God, and bear all the sufferings He sends you? In reparation for all the sins that offend Him? And for the conversion of sinners?"

"Yes, we are willing." Lucia said for them all.

"Then you will have a great deal to suffer," the Lady said, "but the grace of God will be your comfort."

As she pronounced these words, she opened her hands, communicating to us a light so intense that, as it streamed from her hands, its rays penetrated our hearts and the innermost depths of our souls, making us see ourselves in god, Who was that light, more clearly than we see ourselves in the best of mirrors. Then, moved by an interior impulse that was also communicated to us, we fell on our knees, repeating in our hearts:

"Oh, Most Holy Trinity, I adore Thee. My God, my God, I love Thee in the Blessed Sacrament."

The children remained kneeling in the flood of this wondrous light, until the Lady spoke again.

"Pray the Rosary every day," she directed, "to bring peace to the world and an end to the war."

Actually they did not know about war and peace. Amelia and Maria Neves were far more real, but they would obey, just the same; they would remember this, and the Lady seemed to know that they would. She was leaving them now. She was rising and passing from sight....

She began to rise slowly (Lucia has testified), moving to the eastward until she disappeared in the blaze of light that cut her path away and beyond our vision...

For an uncertain length of time the three children remained kneeling near the little oak tree, their eyes fixed on the patch of sky that had received the Lady and taken her from view. Slowly they returned from ecstasy and began with some alarm to seek the sheep they had forgotten. But the sheep were grazing near, the flock intact. All had gone well. The children's hearts swelled large with happiness and peace.

Jacinta glowed. She had been silent in the Lady's presence, but now began to chatter breathlessly, and for her happiness, review each small detail of the experience. Her heart danced with her gladness. Her gentle and effusive nature

overran itself with more joy, seemingly, than such a small and dancing vessel could contain.

"But she was so lovely, lovely, lovely—wasn't she, Lucia?"

Yes, Lucia agreed; the Lady had been lovely—more than lovely. Mere recollection of her was so exquisite an experience that it was touched with pain. Lucia held close in memory the words the Lady had spoken, and from that moment began to possess a literal understanding of what the words implied. In her mind they spread like a veil of sorrow across the glow of remembered joy. "Will you offer yourself to God and bear all the sufferings He will send you?" the Lady had asked. "In reparation for all the sins that offend Him? And for the conversion of sinners?"

"You must say nothing about this to anyone," Lucia cautioned her cousin. "Do you hear me, Jacinta?"

"Oh, I hear you, and I will say nothing—believe me," Jacinta said, and there were no forebodings to impede her happiness. The gate of Heaven did not seem like a needle's eye to her; it was wider by far than the blue sky over Portugal. There were no misgivings or shadows of sorrow in her sight, for she had not yet turned the coin of salvation to see its other side.

"You won't tell anyone?" Lucia asked again.

"Not anyone. Not even my mother," Jacinta said firmly. As for Francisco, the little boy just walked along, his hands in his pockets, his thoughts his own. The sheep, strolled after them.

Lucia went home that Sunday evening guarding preciously her knowledge of the Lady who came from Heaven. Whether she believed the incident too holy to be communicated to others, or instinctively feared the reaction of her family, it is hard to say. Her father, Antonio Santos, was not a man of pious persuasion to begin with, while her mother's invincible orthodoxy seems to have lacked one important ingredient—the leaven of charity. Maria Rosa feared God and His Mother perhaps a little more than she loved them, and appears to have lacked the breadth of heart or imagination that could tolerate, even sentimentally, any "Cinderella" aspects of religion especially in the case of her own daughter.

Lucia was prudently silent. But not Jacinta. Her desire to share the new and shining wonder of the Lady overwhelmed her. No barriers existed between her mother and herself, and she appears to have forgotten the silence she had promised.

Jacinta's mother wasn't home that Sunday afternoon. She had made the long journey to Batalha with her husband to buy a pig. Jacinta waited eagerly at the gate for them until they finally appeared, Olimpia first, and then Ti Marto, keeping patient pace with the weary animal they had purchased at the fair.

Senhora Marto has herself supplied an account of this meeting on the dusty road in front of their house at the tired end of the day:

My little daughter ran to meet me and clutched me around the knees in a way she had never done before. "Mother," she cried excitedly, "I saw Our Lady today, in the Cova da Iria!"

"That's likely, isn't it!" said I. "I suppose you're a saint to be seeing Our Lady!" Jacinta seemed downcast at what I said, but she came into the house with me, saying again: "But I saw her!"

Then she told me what had happened, of the lightning and their fear because of it... of the light... and the beautiful Lady surrounded by light so dazzling you could hardly look at it... of the Rosary which they were to say every day. But I didn't believe anything she was saying, and hardly listened to her. I told her she must have taken leave of her senses, to think that Our Lady had appeared to her!

After that I went to get some food for the pig. My husband had stayed in the corral to see if it was getting on with the other animals. When we had finished seeing to the animals we went back to the house. My Manuel sat down by the hearth and began to eat his supper. His brother-in-law, Antonio da Silva, happened to be there too, and all my children—as far as I can remember, all eight of them. Then I said to Jacinta:

"Tell us that story about Our Lady in the Cova da Iria." And she told us what happened with the greatest simplicity. There had been a most beautiful Lady... dressed in white with a gold cord hanging from her neck to her waist. Her head was covered with a mantle that was whiter than milk, and fell to her feet. It was edged with gold and was so beautiful... her hands had been joined, so... And my little girl got up off the stool and stood with her hands folded on the level of her chest in imitation of the vision.

She said: "The Lady held a rosary in her hand; a beautiful rosary shining like the stars, and a crucifix that shone.... She spoke with Lucia a great deal, but not with me, or Francisco. I heard all that she said. Oh, mother, we must say the Rosary every day; the Lady said this to Lucia. She said too, that she would take us all to Heaven, and other things which I can't remember, but which Lucia knows. When she went back into Heaven the doors seemed to shut so quickly that I thought her feet would get caught...."

Naturally, a story of such dimensions was not received indifferently in the crowded Marto home. It was enjoyed more than it was believed, even with Francisco's solemn agreement to all his sister had said. A mere lack of belief did not keep Jacinta's older sisters from wanting to hear more, although the boys kept interrupting the story with their attempts at comedy. Olimpia confesses that it was all too much for her. Her own opinion was that if Jacinta imagined herself

a saint, and chose to ride her young fancy like a runaway horse, the illusion would pass with a good night's rest.

Ti Marto said very little. A thoughtful man, who respected his children, he wanted most of all to be fair. It was a puzzling story, surely, and he did not think his offspring so remarkable that Heaven, after sifting all the children of earth, would have to select his own. But on the other hand, they were good children, and Our Lord Himself, in His great charity and wisdom, had often bestowed great favor on the least and most humble of men. For the problem facing him, Ti Marto marshaled together and solemnly reviewed his own theological resources.

For ages Our Lady had been appearing in the world at different times and in different ways for reasons most holy, and if she had not come so often to the world in the past, it would be worse off than it was now—bad as that might be. The power of God is very great and even if we do not understand His reasons, we must not oppose His will.

Ti Marto pondered this problem patiently, while by the light of an oil lamp, on that 13th of May, he sipped his potato soup. And today he concludes:

From the beginning I somehow felt that the children were telling the truth. Yes, I think I believed from the first. I was impressed because the children had received no instructions whatever about these things of which they spoke. How could they have said such things if Providence had not assisted them? And why should they lie so outrageously now, when they had always been truthful children?

Ti Marto was the first, and perhaps the only adult in the hamlet of Aljustrel, who believed the strange story told by Jacinta. Senhora Marto did not share his faith, but she was a lady of lively mind who knew a good yarn when she heard one. True or false, she saw no harm in sharing with her neighbors this precocious tidbit dreamed up by Jacinta. Taken purely as a story, it enjoyed a quick success and thorough circulation. As for its impact on the Santos family, we have this report from Maria dos Anjos, Lucia's sister:

First thing in the morning, a neighbor came and told me that Jacinta's mother had said that the child had told her a most extraordinary thing. When I heard it, it gave me rather a shock, and I went straight to Lucia who was sitting under a fig-tree doing I forget what.

"Lucia," I said to her, "I heard that you saw Our Lady in the Cova da Iria. Is it true?"

"Who told you?" she almost gasped.

"The neighbors are saying that Jacinta came out with it to Olimpia." Lucia thought for a while and then said to me:

"And I told her so many times not to tell anyone!" I asked her why, and she

said it was because she didn't know if it was really Our Lady, though it was a beautiful lady.

"What did she say to you?"

"That she wanted us to go for six months running to the Cova da Iria and that she would tell us later what she wanted."

"Didn't you ask who she was?"

"I asked her where she came from and she said: 'I come from Heaven.' "It seemed as if she didn't want to tell me anymore but I almost forced her to. I don't think I ever saw Lucia so sad. Then Francisco arrived and said that Jacinta had not been able to hold her tongue and that at home everyone knew what had happened in the Cova da Iria. Other people began telling my mother, who from the first refused to take it seriously, but when I told her what Lucia had told me she began to take more notice and went to ask her. Lucia told her exactly what she had told me.

Senhora Santos listened first solemnly, then with increased alarm to this elaborate story that she was unable to consider either interesting or cute. It bore the twin horns of deceit and sacrilege. The idea of a calculated lie was at any time equal to raising this lady's emotions, but where the falsehood was wanton enough to invade the sacred precincts of religion—ah, well—and God preserve us all—stern measures were required. It would not be a happy time.

Later that morning, the children led their flocks once again to the Cova da Iria, but it was not a gay procession. They found their overnight fame a painful distinction. Friends and neighbors greeted them with mock applause, and taunted them about the Lady whose radiant beauty had been like a backstage visit to paradise, less than twenty-four hours before.

Jacinta, hardly taller than the sheep, trudged solemnly on, less disturbed by the disbelief of her neighbors than she was punished to know the pain and trouble her tattling had brought Lucia. Francisco had little or nothing to say. The two girls walked in silence. The sheep, untroubled and obedient, moved along.

In the Cova, Lucia watched her little cousin sit down on a lumpy stone, holding her chin in her tiny hands, and wearing her remorse for all to see. Lucia, who had no taste for gloom, began to smile.

"All right, Jacinta; let's forget it and play."

"I don't want to play today. Because I'm thinking of the Lady. That's really why."

"So?" Lucia walked closer. "What are you thinking about the Lady, Jacinta?"

"Well, of how she told us to say the Rosary, for one thing. That's important, isn't it?"

"Yes, I think so; it must be terribly important," Lucia agreed. Funny how,

when she thought of the Lady, that love and strength grew as big as another world inside of her, leaving no space available for anger or impatience.

"And we oughtn't to cheat anymore on the Rosary," Jacinta said solemnly. "We shouldn't say like—well, you know—Our Father, Hail Mary, Hail Mary—that kind of cheating. We should say the whole prayer each time, instead of just the first two words. And the sacrifice part that she mentioned. How do we do that?"

"We'll give our lunch to the sheep," Francisco said. They turned to him, impressed by his suggestion. Francisco remained firm, repeating his resolve, and it was adopted. A brand new, if ridiculously small, champion of the heroic virtues, this reformed lizard-catcher proved himself entirely equal to the program he recommended. How much the sheep enjoyed the bread and cheese we are not sure, but the noontime hunger of the shepherds was very real. Toward the end of the day they were so famished, that Francisco climbed a holm oak tree in pursuit of green acorns. But Jacinta protested. No, she said, not the green acorns; bad as they were, those from the cork oak trees were even worse, and thus would provide the greater sacrifice.

And so on that day (Lucia recalls) our food consisted of acorns. At other times we ate pine needles or roots, blackberries, mushrooms and some other things we gathered at the roots of the pines, though I can't remember their names. And if we happened to be near some property belonging to one of our families, we once in a while had a little fruit. They fasted in secrecy and silence, and, most important, to the tune of no one's applause.

For Lucia, in a comparative sense, this trial of appetite was slight. She had found, without seeking it, a martyrdom at home. Her mother's reaction was almost fierce. The fear that falsehoods were being told (for Maria Rosa was convinced Lucia was lying) attacked not only her conscience, but seemed clearly in her eyes to have imperiled her respectable standing in the village. Not content to fret in silence until the case was proved or disproved, Maria Rosa appears to have broadcast her distress with some noisy posturing.

"Why should such things happen to me at my time of life?" she asked. "I have always been so careful about my children telling the truth, and now my youngest has to lie in this terrible way!"

The household commotion was only beginning. Its heat would increase. The only indifferent witness was Lucia's father, Antonio Santos, who dismissed the whole affair as frantic nonsense dreamed up and sustained by women. Pressed for a more particular opinion, Antonio was even bluntly obscene, and succeeded in detaching himself from nearly all that ensued.

But for Maria Rosa such detachment was not possible. Having launched all

the verbal attacks of which she was capable, and having seen them blunted to ineffectiveness by Lucia's unshakeable insistence that the Lady from Heaven was true, she took more practical steps, which Lucia herself has described.

One day, before I went out with the flock, she tried to force me to say I was lying. She tried pleading, threats, and even the broom handle. To all this she only received stubborn silence or confirmation of all that I had already said. She told me to go and get the sheep and to think well during the day that she had never allowed her children to tell lies, let alone lies like this! She said, too, that in the evening she would force me to go to those people to whom I had told the story and confess that I had lied and ask their pardon. I went to get the sheep, and that day my cousins were waiting for me. When they saw me crying they ran up and asked me what was the matter. I told them all that had happened and added:

"What am I to do? Mother says that I am to say that I am lying. How can I?" Then Francisco said to Jacinta: "You see, it was all your fault because you told!" My little cousin begged our forgiveness on her knees and said: "I did very wrong but I will never tell anything to anybody again!"

When Lucia's mother at last realized that the threat of her broom and the power of her tongue were limited, she decided, and properly, that Father Ferreira, their parish priest, was better equipped than she to meet the devil in head-on collision. One morning, decisively, she accompanied Lucia to the presbytery.

"Now, when you get there," she said, and she wasn't fooling, "you get down on your knees and confess that you have lied and lied. Then you beg forgiveness, do you understand? You can explain it as you like to Father Ferreira, but unless we are done with this lie, and make the truth clear to all the people you have tried to deceive, I'll shut you up in a dark room—do you hear?"

Lucia heard all right, and her fears were genuine. Father Ferreira was an enormous man physically, and though actually soft of voice and gentle within himself, his awesome reputation with Maria Rosa, who lived by his strictures absolutely, made him appear to Lucia as a mountain of authority, a final word, a Daniel with a sword held poised.

But even to the Reverend Father Ferreira, Lucia confessed no lie. The strange words of the beautiful Lady: "You will have much to suffer," were for the first time etched in clarity. And so too was the grace of God, which stood beside her, bigger than the fear.

## CHAPTER 4

### 2nd Apparition - June 13th

The thirteenth of June approached. It was the day designated by the Lady for her second appearance to Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco, who waited eagerly and prayerfully, not to be reassured that what—they had said of this marvelous Lady was true, but simply to see her again, to know her again, and to be embraced in that light of Heaven that conducted her to earth. In the weeks since the first apparition, the news of the alleged phenomenon had spread through the parochial limits of Fatima, finding more credence in distant parishes than it enjoyed at home. Locally, it was considered a joke or, at best, a lively scandal.

But to all Portuguese Christians, the thirteenth of June was a distinguished date for a revered and traditional reason; it was the feast day of their great St. Anthony who, to the undisguised pain of so many Italians, was born in Lisbon, Portugal, rather than in Italy, seven centuries before. This is the same St. Anthony whom people of all nations, and sometimes of mixed beliefs, still petition to find lost wedding rings, bankbooks, car keys, relatives, or anything else that tends to get misplaced. To both the Portuguese and the Italians, St. Anthony is a kind of contemporary and benevolent uncle who never wearies of accomplishing the impossible.

Lucia's mother knew all this. Having succeeded by no other means, she courted the hope that the festa of St. Anthony and its attendant pleasures would cause her daughter to forget this willful nonsense of the Lady. She knew that the day would be glad, the bells would ring, and that all the traditional adornments of the feast, so precious to Lucia, would be repeated. Lucia's sister, Maria dos Anjos, has told us of this:

Our mother knew well how Lucia loved the festa, and she hoped the whole story of the Cova da Iria would pass with it.

"It is a good thing that we are having St. Anthony tomorrow," she said, "and we mustn't say anything to Lucia about going to the Cova. We must talk of nothing but the festa so that by tomorrow she will have forgotten the other foolishness."

We were very careful to do what our mother told us, but of all our plans and

preparations, Lucia seemed to take little notice. Except that once in a while she would remind us, "Tomorrow I'm going to the Cova da Iria; that is what the Lady told us we must do."

Thus St. Anthony, for all his goodness and the glamour of his day, could not compete with the Lady dressed in light. Jacinta and Francisco shared Lucia's certainty their Lady would appear as she had promised. Less bedeviled at home than Lucia, they talked of nothing but the joy ahead of them. Their only sadness came from the refusal of their mother to journey with them to the Cova.

"But, Mama," Jacinta insisted, "Our Lady will be there!"

"Well, I'm certainly not going there; and it isn't true that she appears to you. Be sensible, child." Olimpia Marto was not angrily impatient, but she was becoming more and more wearied of this same repeated and unbelievable story.

"She said she will come again, Mama, and she will."

"You don't want to go to St. Anthony?"

"St. Anthony's no good."

"What's that?"

"We mean—well, the Lady is much, much nicer." It was a little too much for Olimpia, who simply went on with her work.

The morning of June 13 was as summery and bright as St. Anthony himself might have ordered it. In the Marto house, Jacinta and Francisco were awake early. They had already made plans with Lucia to pasture the flocks as soon and as swiftly as possible, so that they would not be late for their date with the Lady at the Cova da Iria. They left the house, still munching their rapid breakfast of bread and cheese, and found Lucia already waiting.

"This morning," Lucia explained, "we'll take the sheep to Valinhos. It's closest to hand, and the grass is very good just now."

The flocks dined well on the grass of Valinhos, and as though to co-operate with the shining day and its great events, they went contentedly back to their corral. With most of the morning free, the children went home to dress in their finest Sunday clothes.

"Will you wait for us?" Jacinta asked Lucia.

"Well, not just now," Lucia said and explained she had promised first to go to Fatima to meet some children who had made their first Communion with her.

"But I will see you there, Jacinta, and we will then go to the Cova."

Lucia dressed quickly, but with attention to detail. Standing in her new and unscuffed shoes, she carefully arranged her shawl at her shoulders and adjusted a white kerchief on her head. Her mother, silently watching these embellishments, began to believe that they were in honor of the festa at Fatima; her inclination was to congratulate St. Anthony on another of his routine miracles; and when

Lucia did go off in the direction of Fatima, Maria Rosa sighed her relief. Her daughter, after all, was just like the rest. Things would be normal again. There would be an end to the family's shame.

But Lucia was dressed for another kind of festa. With her cousins, she believed that the Lady, perhaps more than St. Anthony, deserved the honor of their Sunday best. In Fatima she met the companions with whom she had made her first Communion, and began to exercise on them that effortless salesmanship which appears to have been part of her nature. Years later we were able to interview one of her companions of that day—a Senhora Leopoldina Reis, who told us this:

About fourteen of us who had made our first Communion with Lucia joined together and decided to go with her to the Cova da Iria. As usual, when Lucia proposed something, no one disagreed.

We were in a group, all ready to go, when Lucia's brother, Antonio, came up to us and said, "Don't go to the Cova, Lucia. If you promise not to, I'll give you some money." And Lucia looked back at him and said, "Money? I don't care about the money. What I want is to see the Lady." And we went on for about 300 feet, with Antonio still trying to stop us. He did not succeed, and while we continued on, I noticed Lucia becoming more serious and thoughtful all the while.

Perhaps it should be explained here that for all their troubles in their native Aljustrel the children were not without some unconditional support from this time on. Among the most zealous and faithful converts to the truth of Fatima, was Senhora Maria dos Santos Carreira, who died in 1949. For long years before we knew her, the name Carreira had given place to one by which she is more widely remembered, Maria da Capelinha (Maria of the Chapel). And like the good Ti Marto, father of Jacinta and Francisco, she will be our witness many times. On their way to the Cova da Iria, on that 13th of June, others who were either curious or devout, joined the procession of the children. Some had travelled ambitious distances on foot, and waiting at the place where now the gate to the sanctuary stands, were a group of women, among them our friend, Maria da Capelinha, who has given us this account:

I had decided once and for all to go to the Cova da Iria on the thirteenth of June. On the evening before I said to my children: "What if we don't go to the festa of St. Anthony tomorrow but to the Cova da Iria instead?"

"What for?" they answered. "No, we'd rather go to the festa." Then I turned to my crippled boy, John. "Do you want to go to the festa or with me?"

"With you, mother," he said.

So on the following day, before the others started for the festa, I came here

with my John, who hobbled along on a stick. When we got here there wasn't a soul about, and we went to the roadside where the children would come along. After a while a woman from Loureira arrived and was very surprised to see me there, as she thought I was ill in bed. She asked me:

"What are you doing here?"

"The same as you!"

She sat beside me and shortly after a man from Lomba da Egua arrived, and the conversation we had was much the same as before. Then came some women from Boleiros, and I asked them if they had come away from the festa. "People laughed at us," they said, "but we didn't take much notice. We've come to see what happens here, and on whose side the laugh will be."

Then more people came and at last, about 11 o'clock, the children to whom our Lady had appeared, with some little friends and people from quite far away, Torres Novas or Outeiro, I can't remember which. We all went to the holm oak, and Lucia stopped about three yards in front of it, and looked toward the east. It was very quiet, and then I asked her: "Which is the oak tree where our Lady appeared?"

"This one," she said, putting her hand on it. It was a bush about three feet high, a new strong sapling. It was very well shaped with regular branches. Lucia went a little further away and began looking again in the direction of Fatima, and then went again into the shade of a big tree. It was very calm and still. Lucia sat down near the trunk, and Jacinta and Francisco sat on either side.

Those who had come a long way began to eat lunch and offered some to the children, who each accepted an orange which, however, they didn't eat. I can still see the three of them with the oranges in their hands. Then a girl from Boleiros began to read aloud from a book of prayers which she had brought. As I was ill and feeling weak and tired, I asked Lucia if she thought Our Lady would be long in coming. "She won't be long now," was her reply and she watched for the first sign of the Lady's arrival. Meanwhile the Rosary had been said, and just as the girl from Boleiros was beginning the Litany, Lucia interrupted suddenly, explaining there would not be time to continue. She stood up now and called out to Jacinta, "Don't you see the lightning? Our Lady must be coming!" The three children ran for the holm oak tree, while the rest of us hurried after them, and knelt down on the stony ground. I watched Lucia raise her hands, as though in prayer. We heard her speak to someone who, if there at all, was not visible. There was only one mysterious effect to support our impression of another presence there. We heard something buzzing like a small, small voice, but could not understand what it was trying to say.

But to Lucia, to Jacinta, and to Francisco, there was no mystery. Now, as

once before, their total senses were surrendered to the Lady from Heaven. She stood on the topmost branches of the little oak, gazing on them—maternal, loving, understanding, and yet, in a manner hard to explain, touched with exquisite sadness.

"Please tell me, Madam," Lucia begged, "what it is that you want of me?"

"I want you to come here on the thirteenth of next month," the Lady said. "I want you to continue saying the Rosary every day. I want you to learn to read and write, and later I will tell you what else I want of you."

Stunned though she was by the radiant light and beauty of the Lady, Lucia was not timid. As she has made so clear in her memoirs, the presence of the Queen of Heaven seemed to invite, rather than restrict, communication. Lucia interceded then for an afflicted person whose cause had been recommended to her.

"If he is converted, he will be cured during the year." Now Lucia asked the question closest to her own heart: "Will you take us to Heaven?"

"Yes, I shall take Jacinta and Francisco soon, but you will remain some time longer. Jesus wishes to make use of you to make me known and loved. He wants to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart."[\[10\]](#)

"Am I to stay here alone? " Lucia sadly asked.

"No my daughter. Are you suffering a great deal? Don't lose heart. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God. "

It was at this moment (Lucia has written), that Our Lady opened her hands and communicated to us once again the great light in which she was surrounded. In the light we could see ourselves, and it was just as if we were submerged in God Himself. Jacinta and Francisco seemed to be in that part of the light that represented Heaven, and I was in the light which poured out over the earth. Our Lady's right hand rested near a heart encircled with piercing thorns. And we understood clearly that this was the Immaculate Heart of Mary, outraged by the sins of humanity, and seeking reparation.

Now, as in all the apparitions, only Lucia spoke directly to the Lady. Jacinta, as before, was able to hear and to see the Lady with facility equal to her cousin's, whereas Francisco, absorbed like the others with the vision, could hear nothing. Why this was so, we have no idea, since God dispenses His gifts for reasons of His own.[\[11\]](#) To conclude the story of this second apparition, we will again quote Maria da Capelinha, who was there, and who has faithfully given us her complete impressions: When Our Lady left the tree, Lucia got up very quickly and, with her arm stretched out, cried: "Look, there she goes! There she goes!" We saw nothing except a little cloud a few inches from the tree which rose very

slowly and went backwards, toward the east, until we could see it no more. Some people said: "I can still see it; it's still there..." until at last no one could see it anymore.

The children stayed, silently looking in that direction, until at last Lucia said: "There, now we can't see her anymore. She has gone back into Heaven, the doors are shut!" We then turned toward the miraculous tree, and what was our admiration and surprise to see that the shoots at the top, which had been standing upright before, were now all bent toward the east, as if someone had stood upon them. Then we began to pull off twigs and leaves from the top of the tree, but Lucia told us to take them from the bottom where Our Lady had not touched them. I then noticed a beautiful spray of rosemary growing near and took a piece of that, too, as a souvenir.

Somebody suggested that we should say the Rosary again before going home, but others who had come a long way said that we could say the Litany now, and the Rosary on the way back to Fatima. There was someone there who had a concertina, but I don't remember hearing him play. After the Litany we all went back to Fatima with the children, praying as we went, and we arrived when the St. Anthony procession was just starting. People saw us arrive, and asked us where we had come from. We replied, from the Cova da Iria, and that we were very glad we had gone there.

Sometime that afternoon, about four o'clock, the children returned to their homes. They did not walk alone, but were celebrities now, in a community not accustomed to bizarre events. They trudged on, weary at the end of the day, dusty in their Sunday clothes. A considerable crowd had followed them home, more amused than impressed, and the joking and the heckling were not cushioned with courtesy.

"Lucia, did the Lady dance on the top of the tree?"

"Haven't you three gone to Heaven yet?"

"Jacinta—that cat still got your tongue? Did the Lady speak with you? Are you a saint yet, Jacinta?"

It wasn't easy. Most of it hurt. The irreverence was especially hard to bear. Jacinta, not equal to a noisy exchange of challenges, was quiet at home. The rapid questions overwhelmed her, and her brothers' attempts at comedy cut deeply. Her troubled brows contracted and her lips compressed. She faced them all. Loyally she repeated the Lady's insistence on the Rosary every day, and again she told them the Lady would return each month until October, when she would "say exactly who she was and what she wanted." But of the secret concerning devotion to the Lady's Immaculate Heart, Jacinta spoke not a word; and with equal care she held secret the Lady's assurance that death would come

calling soon for Francisco and herself, with Heaven beyond that no longer frightening door. It was a big day for such a very little girl.

Someone asked Jacinta then if the Lady she had seen was as beautiful as a girl whom all of them knew. Here Jacinta felt no reticence. Truth required no reflection at all.

"The Lady was much, much more beautiful," she said.

"Like that statue of St. Quiteria, Jacinta? With the cloak all covered with stars?" Jacinta smiled. Recollection of the Lady's image enriched her. She could not explain to them, nor even to herself, the beauty or quality of this fundamental light in which the Lady had appeared. One was aware such beauty came directly from God, and yet it was the true flesh and image of a lady most real.

"No," she said, "St. Quiteria is nothing like her."

"Was she like Our Lady of the Rosary?"

"Much, much more beautiful still," Jacinta said. She tried to help them understand, but there was no fair example she could conjure for the occasion. They gathered closer now with that interest all children and most adults display in the pursuit of superlatives—the biggest, the best, the fiercest, the fairest, and so on. Jacinta could assist them no more. She dropped her glance and chewed thoughtfully at her lower lip. The Rosary, she said again (for this was very important), the Rosary should be recited with fervor every day; and the Lady, she explained, had also told them a secret.

Now the interest came truly alive. A secret? A secret? Yes, a secret, but Jacinta, bewildered, and watching them now, saw that unintentionally she had sharpened their appetites to rawness. And the questioning and the insistence and the ungracious intrusions began, hardly ever to stop while Jacinta lived. Only her father seemed to understand that a secret, to have any value, must be honored as one.

All the womenfolk wanted to know what the secret was (Ti Marto has told us), but I didn't try to ask her about it myself. To me a secret is a secret, but I remember one time when some women came to our house for no other purpose than to get it out of her. These ladies were wearing a lot of gold jewelry of different kinds, and one of them said suddenly, showing her bracelets and a necklace to Jacinta, "Do you like these?"

"Yes, I do," my daughter said. "Of course I do."

"And would you like to have them?"

"Surely I would." She was an honest child, Jacinta was, and she didn't try to conceal her admiration for these things.

"Then tell us your secret!" this woman said, and with the others, she began to take off her fancy things and jangle them temptingly.

My little girl was horrified.

"Don't! Please, don't!" I remember she said. "I can't tell you anything! I couldn't tell you the secret if you gave me the whole world!"

From having tracked down her story and having labored over it at different times for seven years, we are convinced that if we know anything about Jacinta, it is this: she was valiant, and with her brother and her beloved cousin she had need to be. The evidence becomes more clear that the God who loved them enough to elect them to His special purposes was not going to spare them from the crucible of serious trial. This formula for sanctity was about to be placed on shoulders very frail.

Father Ferreira, the pastor of Fatima, was troubled now. He began to suspect the devil, an opponent of proved and enduring talents. Father Ferreira simply didn't know what to do with these three very small and difficult parishioners. They kept confounding every sane effort to rid them of their illusions. If one could conclude them to be crazy or irresponsible, Father Ferreira reasoned, it would reduce or even obliterate their blame. But there seemed to be a cool, even diabolic, calculation in their cunning. They were able to handle any and all inquisitors without once trapping themselves in the net of their lie. Obviously, great danger rested in their capacity to persuade ignorant and emotional people to accept them as bona fide seers. The dignity of his Church, in a nation already rife with religious skepticism, imposed a hard responsibility on any pastor whose sheep, however small, were displaying the guile of wolves.

Some days earlier, talking to Lucia's mother, Father Ferreira had advised her to allow her daughter to visit the Cova da Iria on the feast of St. Anthony, if the girl insisted, but he recommended too, that shortly thereafter she should conduct Lucia to the rectory where they would endeavour to bury this nonsense once and for all. As the father of Jacinta and Francisco, Ti Marto received similar instructions from the priest.

On the night before their scheduled interview with Father Ferreira, Lucia visited the Marto house. Exactly what would happen to them when they visited their pastor, Lucia did not know. Facing her mother's accusations had been fierce enough, but she had never been obliged to face the challenge of anyone as overpoweringly important as Father Ferreira.

"What's going to happen to us, Lucia?" the other children asked.

Lucia thought about it. "I don't know," she said, "but at home they are doing their best to frighten me. Are you going to the pastor's house?"

"We have to," Jacinta said. "Our mother was told to bring us." For a while she tried to ponder what terrible punishments might befall. Then she turned to Lucia and Francisco. She was resigned, and no more than half-scared. "Why

should we worry, anyhow?" Jacinta said. "If they beat us, or anything like that, we can suffer it for Our Lord and, like the Lady says, for the conversion of sinners."

On the next day (according to Ti Marto), it was Maria Rosa who took both girls to see Father Ferreira, and I think she brought Francisco with her too. I remember when Maria Rosa came back she said to me, "Well, I took them to see the priest. He kept asking your Jacinta questions, but she wouldn't tell him a thing. 'You don't seem to know anything,' he said to her, 'so you can sit down there, or run away; do anything you like.' All your little Jacinta did was take out her Rosary and begin to pray while Father Ferreira questioned Lucia, who answered him very well. But every once in a while, while Lucia was talking, Jacinta would get up and remind Lucia that she must be sure to explain things properly. This was too much for Father Ferreira, who then said to Jacinta crossly, 'When I was asking you questions, you didn't know anything; you wouldn't say anything, but now we can't shut you up. Why don't you speak for yourself?'"

The interview did not bring any satisfaction to the troubled pastor. All he had gained from Lucia was a restatement of the Lady's beauty, and once again, the Lady's recommendation of the daily Rosary. This was a little more than the reverend gentleman was willing to swallow. His reasoning told him that Our Lady was not likely to journey down from Heaven just to tell people they should say the Rosary. After all, the recitation of the Rosary was an almost general practice in the parish, and the world was full of places in greater need of such advice. And another thing disturbed him. The history of divine communication with individual souls was almost invariably marked by God's further instruction that such sacred tidings be revealed by the chosen few to their confessors or parish priests. Contrary to this tradition, Lucia claimed to be holding some secret to herself. The devil, Father Ferreira became more and more convinced, was working with all his sly and ancient skill. Father Ferreira said aloud, for the first time:

"It could be the work of the devil!"

That was enough. The suggestion did it. For reasons unknown to us, Father Ferreira's speculation placed a very real cloud between Lucia and her beloved Lady.

I began at the time to doubt (Lucia has written), and to wonder if these manifestations of the Lady could be from the devil, trying to deceive me. I had always understood the devil brought with him all kinds of disorder and war, and it was true that since the Lady had first appeared there had not been any happiness or peace in my home. How terribly I suffered. Later I told Jacinta and Francisco of my doubts, but Jacinta would not hear of them. "No, no," she said,

"it couldn't be the devil! People say that the devil is ugly and lives under the earth in Hell, but that Lady was so beautiful, Lucia, and didn't we see her go up into Heaven?"

But such reassurance from the seven-year-old was not equal to banishing Lucia's doubts. It became truly a trial of a soul in the darkest of nights. It was a violated kind of love that Lucia carried in her heart. The ardor for willing sacrifice and mortification had withered to apathy. Lucia travelled so close to despair, that she was tempted to end the whole affair with a false confession to her mother. A solitary lie could purchase peace, she now believed.

"Please, Lucia, don't do it," Jacinta and Francisco pleaded. "Can't you see how terrible that would be?"

But Lucia saw nothing very clearly in this period. She was obsessed with notions of the devil, and her troubles were compounded by a dream.

In this dream (she has told us) I saw the devil laughing at his success with me and he was trying to drag me down to Hell with him. Terrified by the nearness of his reaching hands, I began to scream and call for Our Lady. I remember that my screams awakened my mother who came running in to me, wanting to know what it was. I can't recall what I said to her, but I do know I was far too terrified to sleep again that night. The dream left a cloud of fear and apprehension in my soul.

Actually, the only moments of peace enjoyed by Lucia and her cousins were in the Cova da Iria, close beside the oak tree where their Lady had appeared. Here solace was sustained. Here too they had the comfort and companionship of Senhora Carreira (Maria da Capelinha) who joined them each day at their prayers. Maria, as we have said, was the earliest champion of Fatima. From the beginning, although weak with illness, she began to beautify the honored place of visitation as well as she knew how.

On the evening of the feast of St. Anthony (Maria has confided), when my daughters returned from the celebrations at Fatima, they said to me, "Well, mother, was it interesting today in the Cova da Iria?" I told them I was sorry they had not been there themselves. "Did Our Lady appear?" they asked, and then I told them all that had happened on that 13th of June. My daughters said, "We must go there on Sunday," and so we did. After a while we saw two people approach whom we knew had come from Lomba de Egua. We remained out of their sight so that we could watch them, and we could see them placing carnations on the branches of the little tree. After that we watched them kneel and say the Rosary, and we were very happy, because we knew, somehow, that it was a holy place. From then on, believe me, I always went to the Cova da Iria. If, at home, I had no strength, I knew that when I got to the Cova, I would be

renewed; I would be almost like someone else. I began to clean up around the tree, removing the gorse and prickles and making a little path with a pruning saw. I hung a silk ribbon on one of the branches of the tree, and I continued to place flowers there. Yes, yes, it was always a holy place.

## CHAPTER 5

### 3rd Apparition - July 13th

The fame of the children spread beyond their parish to all the towns and villages of the serra, or mountain range. Whether true prophets, or gifted young charlatans, they had a public both pious and sensation-hungry, so that their next meeting with their Lady, scheduled for the 13th of July, would be attended like a bull fight in some far more populous center.

Innocence, joy, and expectation, remained for Francisco and Jacinta, but for Lucia it did not. Doubt multiplied with every reference by her mother or Father Ferreira to the devil and his sharp connivance. On the eve of the great day, with the pilgrims coming from all sections of the mountainside, her despair had mounted to such proportions that she announced to her cousins her decision not to go to the Cova da Iria on the following day. The children were shocked; they looked betrayed; only their love for their Lady was able to rally them to defiance of Lucia, who had guided all their actions till now.

"We will go anyhow," Jacinta said. "And if you're not there to do it, I will speak to the Lady."

Lucia said softly, "Why are you crying, Jacinta?"

"Why? Why do you think?" Her tears, as big as lemon drops, continued to fall. "Because you won't come with us, that's why."

"I'm afraid to go."

"But why be afraid? The Lady will expect you, Lucia."

"I know that she will."

Lucia had never really doubted that the Lady would be there. The question that held her in terror was not one of presence, but of identity. Who was the Lady? And by whom was she sent?

"If she asks for me, Jacinta, you tell her why I'm not there. Because I am afraid it is the devil who sends her to us!"

She turned from them and raced back to the seclusion of her own darkened room, away from her cousins' tearful pleas, away from her own mother's scolding and everlasting questions, away from Father Ferreira's grim authority, away from the devils who plagued her days, and even invaded her dreams.

But on the next day, suddenly, Lucia's doubts were mercifully dissolved. She could not explain it, nor was she especially anxious to trace the source. The important thing was that faith and joy and hope were restored to her. Exactly when it was time to leave for the Cova da Iria, she ran, free of fear, to her cousins' house.

"I'm coming!" she shouted. "I'm coming with you—wait!"

Olimpia Marto, the mother of Jacinta and Francisco, is today, in her eighties, a happily adjusted lady, free of all imagined care. She is by her very nature a genial assassin of gloom, and we are certain that in 1917 she was rarely, if ever, the victim of foolish fears.

Nonetheless, on this 13th day of July, with her youngest children gone from the house, she confessed her sudden terror. Long before noon the roads and lanes of the serra were crowded with pilgrims. It is likely that never before in her life had she seen an assemblage of so many people in one place. What if, among the thousands, there was one fanatic who might try to hurt her children? What if, among the thousands, there should prove to be, as Father Ferreira's concern implied, one truly evil one? She ran in a kind of panic to Lucia's mother.

"We must go after them, do you hear?" she pleaded with Maria Rosa. "We must go now, or perhaps we will never see them again!"

The more excitable, less optimistic Maria Rosa appears for some reason to have ridden this emotional storm with greater calm than her sister-in-law.

"Olimpia," she said, "if Our Lady really appears to them, she will look after them—no? And if not?" Here Maria Rosa shrugged her inability to deal with matters beyond her understanding, but her statement, as it stands, seems to be her first concession that there might, after all, be some truth in Lucia's story. She decided to go with Olimpia to the Cova. To conceal their identities, they tossed their overskirts over their heads and approached the scene by a back road that was little used. Arriving there, they concealed themselves behind some rocks, each holding in her hand a blessed candle. "Because," Olimpia has explained, "if we had seen anything evil, we were prepared to light them."

Ti Marto also made this journey to the Cova da Iria, but in faith rather than fear, and openly, along the road where the press of the traffic was greatest.

This day I left home determined to see what would happen (he has told us). I could not believe the children were telling lies. How many times I had said to my sister-in-law, "Maria Rosa, if people say all this is just the invention of the parents, you and I know it is not true. We have never encouraged them one bit, and even Father Ferreira says it could be the work of the devil!"

But what a crowd of people were there that day. I could not see the children, because there were so many people in the Cova by the tree. I kept getting closer

to them, and then I could see two men, one of them from Ramila, and the other from Fatima, trying to make a barrier around the children so they would not be crushed. These men saw me and grabbed my arm and they called to the crowd, "Here is the father, let him through!" And so, down by the oak tree, I got close to my Jacinta. Lucia, I could see a little way off. She was saying the Rosary and the people were responding aloud. When the beads were finished, she jumped up suddenly. "Close your umbrellas," she called to the people who were using them to shade the strong sunlight. "Our Lady is coming!" She was looking to the east and I was too, but I could not see anything at first. But then I saw what looked like a little grayish cloud resting on the oak tree. The heat of the sun was suddenly less severe. A fine fresh breeze was blowing, and it did not seem like the height of summer. The people were silent, terribly silent, and then I began to hear a sound, a little buzzing sound it was, like a mosquito in a bottle. I could not hear any words, but just this buzzing. I have often thought that talking on the telephone must sound like that, though I have never talked on one. What is this buzzing? I asked myself. Is it near or far away?

This buzzing sound, referred to by Maria da Capelinha on the occasion of the June apparition, and here by Ti Marto in July, and by countless witnesses in the subsequent and more widely attended apparitions, is too well established by responsible testimony, to be shrugged away. Like the little globule, or ball of light, that so many have attested marked the arrivals and departures of God's living Mother at the small oak tree, it is part of the Fatima story, and part of truth —a gentle inference from Heaven, rather than a blow. Exactly why God chooses to draw His pictures dimly for some, and with the-powerful light of creation for others, we do not pretend to know.

But for Lucia and her cousins there was no dimness. Now, above the little tree, the Lady stood. Her beauty taxed their senses. To Jacinta and Francisco, who had never doubted, it was joy renewed. But to Lucia it was more than that. It was a confirmation. It was a homecoming for the heart and spirit. It was everything. It was the Light of God reflected in His Mother. It was knowledge. It was the end of doubt.

"Lucia," Jacinta said, "speak. Our Lady is talking to you."

"Yes?" said Lucia. She spoke humbly, asking pardon for her doubts with every gesture, and to the Lady: "What do you want of me?"

(The reader will note, and we hope without impatience or fatigue, that there is no cleverness to this story. The dialogue is always much the same. The Lady speaks her message with a sameness that an able stage director would discard. And yet she gives to all the world the one prescription that the world most needs.)

"I want you to come back here on the thirteenth of next month," the Lady said. "Continue to say the Rosary every day in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary, to obtain the peace of the world and the end of the war, because only she can help you."

"Yes," said Lucia, "yes." She was braver now. Love had restored her. In her gladness she wished only to repair the damage of her recent distrust. "I would like to ask you to tell us who you are," she said to the Lady, "and to work a miracle so that everybody will believe that you are appearing to us."

"Continue to come here every month," the Lady said, "and in October I will tell you who I am and what I want. I will perform a miracle for all to see and believe."

Thus assured, Lucia began to place before the Lady the petitions for help that so many had entrusted to her. The Lady said gently that she would cure some, but others she would not cure. "And the crippled son of Maria da Capelinha?" No, the Lady said, neither of his infirmity nor of his poverty would he be cured, and he must be certain to say the Rosary with his family every day.[\[12\]](#) Another case recommended by Lucia to the Lady's assistance was a sick woman from Atougia who asked to be taken to Heaven. "Tell her not to be in a hurry," the Lady said. (The tone here is almost like that of any harried mother importuned unreasonably.) "Tell her I know very well when I shall come to fetch her." There is unquestioned sternness here, for at Fatima, time and again, Our Lady made it unmistakably clear that she was speaking for a just and hideously wounded Christ, whose patience, if not exhausted by the sins of the world, had known such trial that even the Infinite had wearied. The Blessed Mother confided to Lucia and her cousins still another secret.[\[13\]](#) "Sacrifice yourself for sinners," she instructed them, "and say many times, especially whenever you make some sacrifice: O Jesus, it for love of Thee, for the conversion of sinners, and in reparation for sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary."

As she spoke these words (Lucia tells us in her memoirs), "the Lady opened her hands, as she had in the preceding months, but instead of the glory and beauty of God that her opened hands had shown us before, we now were able to behold a sea of fire. Plunged in this flame were demons and souls in human form, like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, floating about in the conflagration, now raised into the air the by flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke, now falling back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight or equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fear. The demons could be distinguished by their terrifying and repellent likeness to frightful and unknown animals, black and transparent like burning

coals. Terrified and as if to plead for succor, we looked up at Our Lady, (Ti Marto, who was witnessing the actions of the children by the little oak tree in the Cova da Iria that day, recalls that Lucia gasped in sudden horror, that her face was white as death, and that all who were there heard her cry in terror to the Virgin Mother, whom she called by name.) who said to us, so kindly and so sadly,"

"You have seen Hell, where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wished to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. This war is going to end, but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the pontificate of Pius XI.[\[14\]](#) When you see the night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that He is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father."

"To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays."

"If my requests are heeded," the Lady continued, "Russia will be converted and there will be peace; if not, then Russia will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecution of the Church. The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she will be converted, a period of peace will be granted to the world. In Portugal, the dogma of faith will always be preserved,... [It was here that Our Lady told the children what has become known as the "Third Secret."] Do not tell this to anybody. Francisco, yes, you may tell him."

"When you pray the Rosary, say after each mystery: O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of Hell. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those who are most in need."[\[15\]](#)

"After this," wrote Lucia, "there was a moment of silence."

"Is there anything more that you want of me?" Lucia had asked the Lady.

"No, my child; there is nothing more for today."

In the Cova da Iria (Ti Marto recalls), we heard a great clap of thunder. The little arch that had been built to hold two lanterns trembled as though it was an earthquake. Lucia, who had been kneeling, got up very quickly. She cried out, "There she goes, there she goes." Then after a moment she quieted. "Now you can't see her anymore," Lucia said. It was to me a great proof.

The third apparition was over.

Now in the Cova the people crowded closer and closer to the children.

"When you were so frightened and sad, Lucia—what had the Lady said to

you?"

"It is a secret," she said truthfully.

"Is it a nice one?"

Lucia reflected, "For some people, yes," she said. "For others, no."

"Can't you tell us what it is?"

"No, I could not. I could not possibly."

The cool calm of the Lady's presence no longer affected the day. Again the sun was glaring and pitiless. The people in a frenzy of interest, pious and vulgar, believing and impudent, prayerful and mocking, all pressed around the children, narrowing the circle, threatening to trample them, until they were rescued by Ti Marto and some others.

The children grasped with remarkable readiness, and held to themselves as their most precious possession, this insight to love and heroic sacrifice that their Lady had granted them. In the fields now, day upon arid and sun-blanchéd day, they chose to be by themselves. They led their sheep along paths but seldom travelled, and safely away from their critics, away from the endless questions and the crude, coarse comedy that seemed to them a blasphemy, they owned a world peculiarly their own.

"Jacinta," Lucia asked one day, "what are you thinking of now?"

Jacinta looked up from where she was sitting. It was the sadness of her expression that had prompted the question.[\[16\]](#)

"I'm thinking of Hell and of the poor sinners who go there," Jacinta said. "Oh, Lucia, how sorry I am for all those souls. The people burning there like coals, I wonder—well why doesn't Our Lady show Hell to those people who sin? If they could see it, wouldn't they stop? Lucia, why didn't you ask Our Lady to show Hell to them?"

"I didn't think of it," Lucia said, simply and sadly. She remained still, watching Jacinta, whose tears were flowing freely. She watched while her little cousin, moved with remorse, fell to her knees, repeating between her unfeigned sobs, the precise words of the prayer taught by the Lady:

"O my Jesus, forgive us our sins and deliver us from the fire of Hell. Take all souls to Heaven, especially those who are most in need."

The sheep wandered quietly in search of grass amid the prickly weeds of the mountainside. Lucia and Francisco had joined Jacinta now. Prostrated on the ground they repeated endlessly:

"O my Jesus, forgive us and save us...."

Jacinta's boundless zeal permitted her no rest. Looking tactfully at her cousin and her brother, she seemed to feel that with their fierce and heart-wrenching supplications, they could pierce the veil-of Heaven and, all by themselves,

depopulate the pits of Hell.

"Lucia! Francisco! We mustn't stop our prayers to save poor souls! So many go to Hell!" Her heart beat in endless pity for the damned, but her intelligence demanded reasonably to understand why people went to such a frightful and hideous place as they had seen.

"Lucia, what sort of sins do they commit?"

Lucia was not too much help. Frankly, she was not an expert. "I really don't know, Jacinta. Missing Mass, I guess. Stealing, swearing, cursing...."

"Just for that they go there?"

"Well, I suppose so; it's a sin."

It was too much for Jacinta, who could not imagine in anyone, a folly or recklessness great enough to tempt the wrath of God. The dialogue continues, and it might assist the reader's understanding of the children's genuine zeal to know that this is not an approximate rendition by the author, but a verbatim extract from Lucia's own scrupulous record. Now Francisco, dwelling on the remembered wonders of the June apparition, speaks to Lucia:

"Why did Our Lady have a heart in her hand that poured out light that we knew was God? You were in the light that fell on the world, while Jacinta and I were in the light that shone up to Heaven. Why?"

"Because," Lucia told him, "you and Jacinta are going to Heaven soon, and I am going to remain on earth for a time."

"How long a time?"

"I don't know—probably many years."

"Did Our Lady tell you that?"

"No, but I could tell from the light."

"I could tell it, too," Jacinta said eagerly, then added, with unqualified joy, "we're going to Heaven—oh, how wonderful, how lovely." But then she stopped, and her thoughts were not for herself alone. Great pity welled in her with the realization that Heaven was not the destined home for everyone.

"You, Lucia—you're going to stay here," she said.

"Please, if Our Lady permits you to, tell everyone of the horrors of Hell. Make them stop their sins, Lucia."

The hours of the morning passed. The dry earth baked like a biscuit. The dust lay heavy but undisturbed in the windless heat. Thirst tormented them, and there was no water.

"I'm thirsty," Jacinta said, "but I am glad I can offer it for sinners."

The hours of the afternoon were so mercilessly hot, that Lucia began to worry about these eager, but rather fragile, penitents in her charge. Their thirst was finally so punishing, that Lucia went to a nearby cottage and asked for

water; yet when she returned with it there was no interest in it.

"I don't want it," Francisco said firmly. "I want to offer my thirst for sinners."

"But you need it," Lucia said. "Both of you need it. Jacinta—you take it; be sensible."

But Francisco and Jacinta were firm in their sacrifice. So I poured the water into a cavity in a big rock (Lucia has written), so the sheep would be able to drink it, and then I went back and returned the jug to the woman in the cottage.

Other times, at the well in back of Lucia's house, they sat in close communion, talking of their Lady and the wonders they had seen.

"Isn't it wonderful, Lucia?" Jacinta asked. "The Lady said that through all your life her Immaculate Heart would be your comfort, and lead you to God. Do you hear what I said?"

Lucia nodded her head, agreeing that she had heard. But the tears were large, unmistakable on her cheeks. She turned to them both.

"I would so much rather go with you to Heaven," Lucia said.

Jacinta fell silent. It was something she could certainly understand. If, at the age of seven, she lacked ability to read in books, or to accomplish on a slate the least mysteries of arithmetic, she knew with a clarity beyond the science of many learned men, that death was not an end, but a beginning. It meant a joyous passage into the keeping of God and His Mother. It was odd, though, she thought, how this Lady of Happiness was in so many ways a Lady of Sorrows, too.

"Lucia—do you remember how Our Lady's Heart, when she showed it to us, was being pierced by thorns?"

"Surely, I do. It simply means that her heart is wounded by the sins of people, and she is asking them to be sorry, and to make up for their sins, so that God will not have to punish them too much. She can't make people be good. They must themselves want to be good."

Jacinta sighed. "The poor, poor Lady," she said. "She asked that people go to Holy Communion to make up for sin. But how can I, Lucia, when I'm not allowed to go?"

"Father Ferreira," Francisco said sadly, "he won't let us."

At other times, the better to concentrate on the things that filled their hearts, the children would separate, and it was on one of these occasions, while Jacinta sat alone, that she had a vision which disturbed her very much. When it had passed, and she was able to rouse herself, she called for Lucia, who was off a little distance, searching for wild honey with Francisco. Lucia returned, quite calm, and since it seemed to Jacinta impossible that she could be favored with any experience that was not revealed to her cousin as well, she was puzzled.

"Lucia—didn't you see the Holy Father?"

"No."

"You didn't? Well, I don't know how it happened, but I saw the Holy Father in a very big house. He was kneeling before a table. He had his hands held to his face and he was crying. I saw him get up and go to the door of the house, but when he got to the door there were a lot of people swearing horribly at him, and throwing stones. The poor Holy Father, Lucia—we must pray a lot for him."

Another place still favored by the children, was the field called the Cabeco. It was not only the place where they had twice beheld the angel, but it had remained for them a secure, dependable shelter from the endless intrusions of curious people. Here, too, Jacinta had an experience not shared by her cousins. They had been prostrated on the ground, repeating and repeating the prayer of atonement taught to them by the angel, when suddenly Jacinta leaped up.

"Francisco! Lucia! Can't you see all those streets and roads and fields that are filled with people? They are crying with pitiful hunger.[\[17\]](#) And the Holy Father is in a church, praying to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Can't you see him?" No, the others admitted, such a sight was not granted to them. There certainly appears not to have been any competitive striving for place or distinction among these three good friends of the Lord. The children were becoming famous. To some degree, beyond the parish of Fatima, they were venerated.

Ladies kept coming to our house (Ti Marto tells us) all dressed up in their fancy clothes and Heaven only knows from where. They invaded our house and our privacy in such a way as would make you ashamed. Ugh! My! They were so curious. All they wanted to know was the secret. They would take Jacinta on their knees and keep bothering her with questions, tormenting her, never giving her any rest. A fine chance they had. You couldn't get that secret out of my little girl with a corkscrew, believe me. They tried bribing her with presents when their pleading failed. All they did really was waste their own time and our time, too, since we had work to get done. Even our meals were disturbed.

Many fine gentlemen came to our house, but not to be kind or helpful. They came just to make fun of simple people like ourselves who could not read or write. Often it was the children who had the laugh on them. These proud people, poor things, they had no faith, so how could they believe in Our Lady!

But when these cynical people came, it seemed as though the children knew beforehand what to do, and they would be off to hide before the people even put one foot in the door.

One day I was amused, I can tell you. A large family of curious people arrived in an automobile, and they came in, but like magic the children were gone. Lucia was under a bed and Francisco was hidden in the attic, like that, but

my Jacinta, who had not been so quick, was caught. I remember that when these people had gone away, Lucia came out of her hiding place and said to Jacinta, "What did you tell them when they asked for me?"

"Why, I didn't say anything, of course, Lucia. How could I? I knew where you were, and lying is a sin. But were they not silly people?"

Such questions they asked. It was a shame some times. Like did Our Lady have sheep and goats? Did Our Lady eat cheese? These fancy people, with such questions as even ignorant ones wouldn't ask.

The visiting clergy, it is recalled, were almost as much as a plague to the peace of the home, as were the graceless pryings of the uninstructed.

They kept questioning us and questioning us (Lucia recalls), and then, as if that were not enough, they would start all over, from the very beginning. Whenever we saw a priest coming, we did our best to escape, and when we were caught and had to oblige them, we offered it to God as one of our greatest sacrifices.

There were, of course, some pleasant exceptions to their dreary clerical callers, and the recollection of certain priests gives great happiness to Sister Lucia even now.

One of them (she has written) said to me: "You must love Our Lord very much for all the graces and benefits He is giving to you." His words were so gracious that I have never forgotten them and I have ever since then tried to say more or less constantly, "My God, I love You, and I thank You for the graces You have given me."

They had other good friends, and needed them. Never was the biblical statement ("no prophet is accepted in his own country") more clearly underlined than in Aljustrel.

The worst trials fell to Lucia. Her mother's brief solicitude, displayed on the day of the third apparition, did not last very long. This business of apparitions began to hit Maria Rosa where it hurt the most, in the stomach and the pocket. The family had always been poor. Their few plots of ground, much of it in the Cova da Iria, had been the source of their daily bread. At best, their supply of maize and beans and olives and acorns had been modest, but now, with swarms of pilgrims trampling the miserable acres of the Cova, it meant a grim farewell to their produce. People in their hob-nailed shoes, or blithely astride their donkeys and mules, not only destroyed the existing crops, but destroyed any prospect of new planting in the wretched earth.

My mother did not spare my feelings. She was loud in her lamentations. "When you want something to eat." she would tell me, "you had better ask your Lady!" And my sisters:

"You can have what comes from the Cova da Iria," they used to tell me.

Sympathy and saintly endurance seem not to have been controlling traits in the Santos family. Lucia was hounded to such an extreme of timidity, that she dared not reach for a piece of bread at the table. Her older sisters, who ordinarily contributed to the family income from the receipts of their sewing and weaving, found themselves unable to pursue these profitable tasks. The daily swarm of visitors required the attention of some, and others were obliged to pasture the sheep while their celebrated sister was being interviewed. A particularly unhappy episode is recalled by Maria dos Anjos:

One day a neighbor of ours, an elderly woman of about sixty, told our mother it was no wonder the children kept saying they had seen Our Lady, because she had herself seen a woman giving Lucia a ten cent coin. Without wasting time or words, mother called Lucia and asked if this were true. Lucia said the woman had given her a five cent coin, not a ten cent one. Mother didn't believe Lucia, and ended by beating her with the broom handle, saying those who told little lies were apt to tell big ones too. Soon after the beating, Jacinta came by and showed mother the ten cent piece that had been given to her and not to Lucia.

Maria Rosa's cynicism and hasty justice were duplicated many times by other women in the parish. As if there were grace or profit in the act, they insulted Lucia whenever they met her, and if both the mood and opportunity could be joined, they did not hesitate to box her ears. A careful kick at Lucia's retreating figure was not unusual.

Jacinta and Francisco had a better time of it, and mainly because of the vigilance, honor and kindness of Ti Marto, who would allow no one to threaten, or raise a hand to his children. Behind the secure protection of her father's love, however, Jacinta longed for the dubious delight of being pummeled black and blue.

"I wish my parents were like yours," she told Lucia.

"Then I could get beaten, too, and I would have another sacrifice to offer Our Lord."

## CHAPTER 6

### Arrest and Imprisonment

As the 13th of August approached, all Portugal knew the story of Fatima, although in a variety of versions, some pious, and many profane. The anti-religious press was especially fond of this story that drifted down from the lonely uplands of the Serra da Aire. It was tailored to the talents of the more "enlightened" editorial writers, and so replete with comic possibilities, that almost any working journalist, three paragraphs deep in his daily stint, could shine like a new Voltaire.

If the facts were distorted, it made little difference.

"What facts?" they wanted to know. These children (how many were there, anyhow? ) were the puppets of the Jesuits. Not the Jesuits? Well, then, the clergy in general, or the pope, in particular—luring ignorant and unwary people to the Cova da Iria, in order to fleece them of their money. They didn't have any money? Well, then, of their political allegiance, so that the humane fabric of the enlightened Republic could be sabotaged to the advantage of Roman reactionaries

The press enjoyed its jolly excursions. The Freemasons were delighted. All loyal supporters of the reigning "New Order" found increasing humor of the situation.

Less amused than most freethinking citizens was Senhor Arthur Santos, the mayor of Vila Nova de Ourem, the county in which Fatima belonged. He could afford to laugh less than others, because the responsibility of dealing with all this rosary-rattling hysteria was his.

Arthur Santos was by training a tin smith. His formal education had been slight, his ambitions large. A self-propelled and intrepid young man, he became the editor of the Ouriense, a local gazette in which his antimonarchical and anti-religious opinions were expressed with bitter zeal, and likely enough, some talent. In any case, with the advent of the Republic in 1910, Arthur Santos, at the age of twenty-six, was a man of consequence. After being elected to the Masonic Lodge of Leiria, the bustling Senhor founded a separate lodge in his native Vila

Nova de Ourem, and was, before long, mayor or administrator of the county. This carried with it the corollary titles of President of the Chamber and Judge Substitute of Comarca. Wearing all these honors, with their companion authority, Senhor Santos was the most feared and influential man in his section of Portugal.

Since he professed not to believe in God, Senhor Santos was in no position to believe in a Virgin Mother as someone likely to appear either in Heaven or on top of an oak tree, for the amusement of the ignorant bumpkins of his own community. Either someone was crazy, or there was a willful attempt to undermine the civic power. The danger was apparent in the fact that some of his constituents already believed there were miracles astir, and he could not imagine what explanation he could provide his political colleagues if this anti-republican witchcraft continued to thrive in his own county. He gave instructions therefore, that those involved in this sham be brought to the City Hall and, for our enlightenment, we have Ti Marto's own account:

My brother-in-law, Antonio, had received the same summons to appear with his daughter at the Town Hall of Ourem on August 11, at noon. They both came to my house that morning, while I was eating my breakfast, and the first thing Lucia asked me was, "Are Jacinta and Francisco coming?"

Now, what would two small children like that be doing there at the Town Hall, Lucia?" I said. "I'm going down to answer for them myself."

Well, the next thing I knew, Lucia had rushed inside, and we could hear Jacinta saying to her, "If they're going to kill you, tell them that Francisco and I are just the same as you, we believe the same thing, and we wished to be killed, too."

And my little one meant it, but never mind now. I left with Lucia and her father. On the way Lucia fell off the donkey three times, and Antonio, who was full of fear of the mayor, went rushing ahead, so as not to be late. When Lucia and I finally got to the square, we saw Antonio waiting there.

"What happened?" I said to him.

He was all excited. "The door was locked," he said.

"There's no one there." But it wasn't noon yet, anyhow, so we waited.

After a while we tried the Town Hall. It was still closed. Someone came along about then and told us the mayor didn't work there anymore, so we were taken to him, and the first thing the mayor demanded of me was:

"Where is the child?"

"What child?" I said.

I waited. He didn't seem to know that there were three children, but, of course, in a while, he caught on.

Now, look, sir," I told him, "it's more than nine miles distance to our village

and the little children couldn't walk it. No, sir, and they're not used to the donkey, either." I felt like adding a whole lot more, but I was wise enough to hold my tongue. Oh, he was very annoyed, but a lot I cared. He began to question Lucia then, trying to get the secret out of her. A fine chance he had. She wouldn't tell him a word. Then the mayor turned to my brother-in-law.

"You people in Fatima," he said to Antonio, "do you believe this stuff?"

"No, sir," Antonio said, "we believe it's just women's talk."

I interrupted then. I said to the mayor, "I'm right here, your Honor, and I believe everything my children say."

He looked at me. "You do? You believe it?"

"Yes, I do," I said.

Well, everyone standing around began to laugh, but it made no difference to me. There were reporters there from the newspapers, and they said they were going to write it up. After a while they let us go, but right up to the end the mayor kept threatening Lucia. He even said that if she didn't reveal her secret, he would have her killed. I said to him then, as we were leaving, "If you send for us, I know that we'll have to come, but please remember we have our own lives to lead!"

It was Lucia's first interview with the civil authorities, and if it was not a pleasant one, she at least escaped unscathed. At home Jacinta and Francisco did not have this comforting assurance. They wept by the well in Lucia's yard, and when they saw her, finally, they rubbed their eyes, as though gazing at some youthful Lazarus.

"Lucia! Lucia!" Jacinta sobbed. "Your sister told us they had killed you!"

In her grief, Jacinta appears to have overlooked the Lady's assurance that when death came calling so early, it would be for Francisco and herself.

The mayor, a resourceful, energetic fellow, had only begun his work of suppression. If there was a local bandwagon, bound for Heaven, it was his intention to spill it in the first available ditch; and he chose as the time most opportune, the day for which the fourth apparition was scheduled. Ti Marto's record continues:

On the morning of August 13—it was a Monday—I got a summons to come home from my work at once. All right, I went. There were a lot of people outside my house, but I was used to that by now. I went inside and was washing my hands. My wife was sitting there. She was nervous and upset and all she did was point to the living room. "All right," I said, "I'll go in there. Why such a fuss?" So I walked inside still using a towel, and who should I see but the mayor himself. Even then, I suppose, I wasn't very polite to him, because I saw that a priest was there, too, and I went first to shake hands with the priest. Then I said

to the mayor, "I did not expect to see you here, sir."

He was a great actor, that man. "I thought that after all I would like to go to the miracle today," he said. What's this? I asked myself, but the mayor went on, "I thought that we would all go together in my carriage. We will see, and then believe, like St. Thomas," he said.

I watched him closely now, because I could see he was nervous. He kept looking around before he said, "Aren't the children coming? It is almost time for the apparition."

"There is no need to call them," I said. "They will be ready when it is time to go."

Just then they came into the room, the three of them, looking no different, and the mayor invited them to go in his carriage. That wasn't necessary, the children told him.

"It will be better that way," the mayor insisted. "No one will bother you on the way and, besides, I want to stop off at Fatima to see Father Ferreira."

So what could we do? We went along—myself, the children, and Lucia's father. The mayor went in to see Father Ferreira at the presbytery, then in no time at all he called down, "Send the first one up."

"The first what?" I said.

His tone was different now. He was full of authority.

"Send Lucia!" he said.

"All right," I said. No use getting in too much trouble.

"Go ahead, Lucia." And she went into the house, supposedly to talk to Father Ferreira. My own two children stood there on the steps, while I was with Antonio, Lucia's father. It was just a trick, this business of talking to the pastor, [this is incorrect][18] because when it was time for Jacinta and Francisco to go in, the mayor said, "It doesn't matter now. We can all get started." Well, it was a smart trick, all right, because I hadn't noticed the mayor's carriage moving closer all the time to the steps where the children were standing. First thing I knew, the mayor had them seated with him. Francisco in the front, and the two girls in the back. The horse went off at a lively trot. For a while it looked as though they were going to the Cova da Iria, but when they got to the main road the horse was whipped suddenly and they were off, racing toward Ourem. And there was nothing I could do.

The horse and carriage moved briskly along the road to Vila Nova de Ourem. Lucia turned to the mayor and said, "Where are you taking us? This isn't the way to the Cova da Iria."

We have no precise report on the conversation that followed, except that the mayor, in uneasy possession of his kidnapped cargo, attempted to calm them. He

was merely taking them to Ourem, he explained, to see the parish priest there, after which, he insisted, they would be returned to the Cova by automobile. He appears to have been a nervous and unskilled liar. Along the road now, people began to recognize first the mayor's carriage, and then its unwilling passengers. Just how noisy or conspicuous they were, we do not know, but in any event the mayor did feel obliged to cover all three with a carriage rug on the floor to keep them out of sight.

An hour or so later, they arrived at the mayor's house. He shut them firmly in a room, and advised them they would not be freed until they confided their precious secret to him. Precisely why the mayor, wanted to pry the children loose from their secret, remains a mystery. After all, he was a man of avowed disbelief in the supernatural. What value could another of their imaginative discourses have for him? Except, of course, that the secret might prove so ridiculous that its publication alone would dissolve the band of faithful who had come to believe in the incredible but lively legend of the three little prophets and their Lady.

Alone, the children appraised their situation. "If they kill us," Jacinta said, "it won't matter much; will it? Because we'll all go straight to Heaven."

A willing, and perhaps even an eager martyr by now, Jacinta was a bit ahead of schedule. Actually, the balance of this afternoon was not unpleasant. The mayor, if less kindly and conscience-ridden than Pontius Pilate, had a wife whose sympathies belonged to his victims, rather than himself. She managed to free them from the room where they were confined, and to feed them generously, offering her own children as companions for the afternoon. Later, in the terrifying hours they were to know, she brought them books and toys, and did all in her limited power to soften their brutal ordeal.

Back at the Cova da Iria, of course, the children's appointment with their Lady was not kept. But for evidence that the Queen of Heaven appeared on time, we offer the testimony that Maria da Capelinha has provided:

As before, I arrived very early at the Cova and sat down near the little tree where Our Lady had appeared. I went in spite of the fact that many people had tried to frighten me out of going. There were rumors it was the devil who came, and that he would wait until many people had come, then open the earth and swallow us all. A woman from Caterina had told me this, but I was not afraid. With so much praying going on, I decided, nothing so evil could happen. I asked Our Lady to guide me according to the divine will of her Son, and then I went.

The crowd this day was even greater than it had been in July. Oh, there were many, many more. Some came on foot and hung their bundles on the trees. Some came on horses. Some on mules. There were bicycles too, and everything else,

and on the road there was a great noise of traffic.

It must have been around 11 o'clock when Maria dos Anjos, Lucia's sister, got there. She had some candles with her that she expected to light when Our Lady came to her sister and her cousins. All around the tree, the people were praying and singing hymns, but when the children did not appear, they began to get impatient. Then someone came from Fatima and told us they had been kidnapped by the mayor. Everyone began talking at once; there was great anger, and I don't know what would have happened if we hadn't heard the clap of thunder.

It was much the same as the last time. Some said the thunder came from the direction of the road and others said it came from the tree. To me it seemed to come from a long way off. But wherever it came from, the thunder was a shock to the people. Some of them began to shout that we would be killed. We all began to spread out, away from the tree, but, of course, no one was hurt in any way. Just after the clap of thunder came a flash of lightning, and then we began to see a little cloud, very delicate, very white, which stopped for a few moments over the tree, and then rose in the air until it disappeared. As we looked around, we began to notice some strange things we had observed before and would see again in the months to follow. Our faces were reflecting all the colors of the rainbow—pink and red and blue and I don't know what. The trees suddenly seemed to be made not of leaves, but of flowers. The ground reflected these many colors, and so did the clothes we wore. The lanterns that someone had fixed to the arch above us looked as though they had turned to gold. Certainly Our Lady had come, I knew, even though the children were not there.

Then when all these signs had disappeared, the people started for Fatima. They were shouting out against the mayor and against Father Ferreira, too. They were against anyone connected with the imprisonment of the children.

It was not a happy time for the just and temperate Ti Marto. Robbed, at least temporarily, of his children, and already, because of his independence, in disfavor with the powerful mayor, he walked on toward the Cova da Iria, and he has described for us the disturbance he found:

"Let us go to Ourem and protest!" some of the people were saying. "Let us go and beat them all up! Let us speak to the priest, because it is his fault, too. Let us go now and settle with the mayor!"<sup>[19]</sup> I thought to myself that in a way they were right, but they had worked themselves into a temper of such violence that I feared what they might do. I began to shout at them: "Be quiet! Take it easy! There is no reason to injure anyone! Whoever has done something evil will be punished. This affair is in the hands of God!" But they wouldn't take any notice of what I said. They went on in their anger toward Fatima. As for me, I went to

my house, and found my wife in tears. Olimpia was not easy to console. Her sobs continued, her fears multiplied. She had rushed with her bad tidings to Maria Rosa, the mother of Lucia, but that strange and difficult-to-fathom lady seemed more pleased than grieved to know a crisis had finally arrived.

"If they are lying," said Maria Rosa, "it will teach them a lesson, and if they are not, Our Lady will look after them."

On the following day the children awakened in the mayor's house at Ourem, and Jacinta, more than the others, found these strange surroundings difficult to bear. Above all she missed her mother. She began to pray for strength and guidance from the Virgin Mary. The mayor, more like a goblin than a grown man, had marshaled his various scalp-raising devices for the bitter business of the day. The first arrival in the children's room was an old lady inquisitor, who did everything but spin on her horns to extract the famous secret. She did not succeed, and was withdrawn in favor of the mayor himself.[\[20\]](#) The children were brought before him at approximately ten o'clock. He enlisted charm. He placed shining coins and a beautiful gold chain on the table. "The secret, please?" he requested, but without success. The Mayor began to feel less clever, even though his bag of tricks had scarcely been opened.

In the afternoon the children were put in the public jail. The imprisonment was real. They were cast among adult and hardened sinners, with the Mayor's solemn assurance that they would remain in the jail only until a cauldron of boiling oil had been prepared. When the oil was bubbling properly, they would be thrown into it—alive.

They doubted neither the mayor nor his jailers, and for two hours they expected precisely this sizzling end to life on earth. Again Jacinta appears to have suffered the most. She tried to conceal her tears from Lucia and Francisco by gazing through a window to the market square. But Lucia; who was stronger, and who loved her so dearly, wasn't fooled.

"Why are you crying, Jacinta?"

"Because we'll die without even seeing our parents," Jacinta said. "They haven't even come to see us. That's how much they care."

The betrayal, the abandonment, the end of love, were more cruel to her than the prospect of martyrdom. Francisco appears to have passed through this trial with extravagant courage. Like some small Saint Stephen, he was ready for sticks or stones or boiling oil.

"Don't worry, Jacinta," he consoled his little sister. "We can offer this for sinners, too."

This was not play-acting. Their conviction was complete. Nor was there self-conscious piety displayed. The act of reparation, the consignment of personal

suffering to God so that He might find even greater mercy for others, had become a natural, everyday thing. They joined their hands and together said, "O my Jesus, this is for love of You, for the conversion of sinners...."

Understandably, to their fellow prisoners, the children did not present a tableau seen every day. Pop-eyed, nudging one another, the inmates crowded close. Awkwardly, fumblingly in their ways, they tried to comfort them, without, however, retreating from their own conviction that these children were crazy.

"Look, be smart," one of them suggested. "Tell the mayor the secret and you can go home. It doesn't matter about the Lady."

"It doesn't matter?" Jacinta, incredulous, looked at the man. "But we'd much rather die than tell the secret."

So there you are, and there were the prisoners, scratching their puzzled heads. This sort of thing they had never witnessed before. It touched them, if not spiritually, then at least sentimentally. It tugged at chords of sympathy they were embarrassed to know they still possessed. Unable to dissuade their strange new friends from such grim resolve, they tried then, as best they could, to brighten the burden some way. One of the prisoners had a concertina which he began to squeeze like a musical muff. The result was gay enough. Other prisoners began to sing.

Jacinta was feeling better now. The tears dried on her cheeks, a smile tugged at the corners of her mouth. The rhythm and the pleasant nonsense of the moment went to her feet if not to her head. One of the larger inmates invited Jacinta to dance, and with solemn courtesy, she accepted. Lucia, whose sense of comedy has always been as broad as her charity, began to laugh. The prisoner tried valiantly to cope with the size of his partner, but found that the only reasonable solution was to gather her up like a loaf of bread in his arms and continue the dance himself. The concertina labored merrily along.

It was all very amusing, we are told, and gloom departed the jail cell like a frightened cat. But Jacinta, while being whirled, came suddenly to realize this was not—as far as she knew—a good preparation for martyrdom. She did not know if her beloved Lady would approve of the general commotion. She asked the prisoner please to put her down, and when he had, she dug deep in her pocket for a holy medal, which she then, with some ceremony, hung from a nail on one of the walls. Devoutly, with Lucia and Francisco, she knelt on the bare floor and began to recite the Rosary aloud. Automatically, the older prisoners knelt in deep respect, the single flaw in their gesture being one man's failure to remove his hat. Francisco, to correct this, got up and walked over to him.

"Sir, when you pray," he remarked, perhaps too smugly, "you are expected to take off your hat."

The prisoner, flustered by the amused hoots of his cell mates, took it off all right, then heaved it violently to the floor. Francisco very politely retrieved it, dusted it, and placed it gently on a bench. It was a lovely incident, and the angels, it seems fair to assume, were working overtime.

But suddenly, while they were praying, there was a frightening clamor beyond the door. It opened and a prison guard stood sternly there.

"You three," he said. "Yes, you. It's time."

In their own minds, at least, they stepped forward to the doom for which they had prepared. Once again they were obliged to face the mayor.

"Well?" he said.

There was no reply. No sign of capitulation. The mayor was baffled. In the children's presence he gave elaborate orders about the preparation of the boiling oil, and was assured by his aides that it was boiling very nicely. The mayor then turned to the children.

"It's your last chance to tell the secret. Do you hear? Well—do you?" His glance settled on Jacinta, who trembled and paled. The terror swelled within her. "Take that one first!" he shouted to the guards. "Throw her into the cauldron!"

"Dear Jesus, help me! Our Lady help me!" Jacinta called aloud. The guards grasped her and shook her, but found her resolution still unshaken. The secret remained her own. The door closed behind her. The staging was effective, and the drama, as far as the children knew, entirely real.

Lucia, left alone with Francisco, turned to him. He had really become quite a fellow. And if, as so many have concluded, he was the least favored of our Lady's small friends, he had aimed himself point-blank at Heaven. Clearly, he could hardly wait for the glad someday.

"If they kill us," he said, "what about it? We'll be in Heaven, won't we, Lucia? Is there anything more you could want?"

"No, Francisco, I'm sure there is not."

She watched him tug at the rosary in his pocket. She saw his lips move now in prayer. A guard, watching them closely, came over.

"What are you saying?" the guard inquired.

"An Ave Maria," Francisco said, "so my little sister will not be afraid."

Beyond the room there was ominous silence until the door swung open. The guard who had taken his sister away, placed heavy hands on Francisco.

"Your sister's well cooked by now, young man. It's your turn next. You might as well come out with that secret. Don't be a crazy and stubborn fool. Tell his Excellency what he wants to know."

"I can't," Francisco said. "It isn't possible. I can't tell anyone."

They led him through the door and only Lucia remained. The oldest of the

children, she was only ten. From the beginning she had not doubted that the cauldron of oil was real. Her inquisitors, returning, and carrying their wrathful drama to its clumsy and faltering conclusion, were naturally as unsuccessful with Lucia as they had been with the others. In another few moments the children were joyfully together, and the only thing resembling a cauldron of boiling oil, was the temper of his honor, mayor, administrator, and torch-bearer of the new "enlightenment," who did not believe in God.

That evening the mayor's wife fed them well, and they slept together happily under the mayor's roof. By the morning of the Feast of the Assumption, his honor gave up, and in concession to popular sentiment, returned the children by carriage to the presbytery of Father Ferreira, the pastor of Fatima.

In Fatima, on August 15, Father Ferreira was concluding the last Mass of the holy day. His parishioners were restless through the final prayers. Glances were anxious and meaningful. Curiosity was high. As soon as they were outside the church, the people gathered close and demanding around Ti Marto.

"Where are the children?" they wanted to know. "What has happened to them, Ti Marto? How much do you know? Or is it that you do not care?"

Outside the church (Ti Marto has told us) I tried to tell the people that I knew nothing about the children, really, but only trusted in God. On the day they were taken away, I explained, my stepson, Antonio, and some other boys, reported they had seen them playing on the veranda of the mayor's house at Ourem, but they could be anywhere now, even at Santarem.

Well, just as I was telling them this, I heard somebody shouting, "Hey, Ti Marto—look! There they are now, on the porch of the presbytery." I can tell you I don't know how I got there, but the first thing I knew I was holding and hugging my Jacinta. I can even remember that I picked her up and held her in my right arm—so, like this, and I am not ashamed to say my tears were such that they got my little girl all wet. The other two, Francisco and Lucia, they ran up to me. "Father, Uncle," they said, "give us your blessing." You can be sure I did, and that it was a wonderful moment for me.

Just at this time now there appears a funny little man who is a kind of official. He works for the mayor. Well, this man is so frightened he cannot stop trembling. I have never seen anyone tremble in this way. He said to me then, this little man, he said, "Well, here are your children."

I said to him then, "This affair could have ended very badly, and it is not your fault that it hasn't." He did not say anything. "You wanted them to say they were lying, but they would not," I told this man. "And even if they had been so frightened that they gave in to you, I would still have told the truth of it!"

Well, by this time, in the square, there is a terrible noise of the angry people.

They are shouting and waving their arms and making threats. They are on my side, you understand, but they are dangerous this way. Father Ferreira hears all this noise and climbs to the top of the presbytery steps where I am standing with the children. He thinks I am making the trouble and he says to me, "Senhor Manuel Marto—are you causing all this disturbance?"

Me? I was still holding Jacinta in my arms. I called down to the people in the square, "Be quiet, all of you! You are shouting against the mayor and you are shouting against Father Ferreira—quiet! You don't even know why you are shouting. This trouble, I tell you, comes from a lack of faith in God, and that is why He permits it."

Well, Father Ferreira seemed satisfied. From the porch we had gone inside the house. He went to a window then and faced the people.

"Senhor Marto is right; he is quite right," he called to them.

At this moment the mayor himself arrived at the presbytery and came upstairs to where we were standing by the window. With authority now he shows himself to the people and says to me, "That is enough, Senhor Marto; that is enough."

To keep the peace I said, "It is all right. Nothing has happened to the children."

After a while the mayor called me into Father Ferreira's office. Looking at me, he said to Father Ferreira, "For myself, I prefer the conversation of Abobora (meaning "The Pumpkin," Lucia's father), but I suppose I must talk with Senhor Marto, too."

He meant by this that he did not like the religious tone of my talk and Father Ferreira said to him, politely but firmly,

"Mr. Mayor, we cannot do without religion."

Well, the mayor thought about this, and perhaps to show what a generous man he was, he invited me to have a glass of wine with him at the tavern. I refused his invitation, but just then I saw a group of noisy boys below us; they were armed with sticks, and I said to myself there will be serious trouble if the anger of the crowd is not relieved, so I said to the mayor, "All right, I will have a drink with you."

He felt better then, because he knew the way the people felt. At the bottom of the stairs, so they could hear him, he said, "You can be sure I treated the children very well."

I did not at the time know exactly how he had treated them, but they seemed all right to me.

"It's not I who is worried," I said to him. "It's the people who want to know."

The crowd broke up and the danger was past. In the tavern then, feeling more

secure, he started a silly conversation of some kind, then tried to tell me that the children had told him their secret. Very calmly, I said then, "Certainly, certainly; they wouldn't tell the secret to their own mother or father, so it's natural they would tell it to you."

Meanwhile the children had gone to the Cova da Iria to pray. The mayor insisted on taking me in his carriage down to the post office where I had to go. It was amusing, in a way. Some of the people saw me in the carriage and began to shout, "There goes Ti Marto! He's talked too much, and the tinker is taking him off to jail!"

The children's release from the mayor's custody brought joy and new hope to their followers—by now a sizeable and expanding cult. They had been deeply moved by the strange events in the Cova da Iria on the August 13th just past. The rainbow colors that had washed the earth with strange and unexplained beauty at the time of the Virgin's visitation, had more than impressed; it had left a deposit of wonder with all who were there. The new advocates were many, and chief among the faithful was the pious and unwavering Maria da Capelinha, who was stumbling into troubles of her own.

The good Maria was being hung on an ancient hook, cash money. Involuntarily she had become the receiver of alms left on the little table that she had covered with candles and flowers, not in hope of any material gain, but only to honor the Lady in whom she believed. Now the money was a problem, and began to burn warm in her hands. She has herself related to the author the embarrassment caused her by these unsolicited cash receipts:

When the people in the Cova heard that the children had been imprisoned on that August 13th and had seen the wondrous sign of the Lady, you can imagine how much money poured onto that table. The people pushed so hard all around it, that I thought at one moment that it was going to upset. They began to shout at me:

"Take the money, woman, take it and look after it; see that you don't lose any...." I had my lunch bag with me and began to put the money in that. In the afternoon when there weren't many people there, I saw Tia Olimpia's eldest son, Antonio, passing by, and I said to him:

"Will you come here a moment?" He came, but when he saw what it was all about, he wouldn't say anything and went away. So I took the money home and counted it. It came to 13 'mil' and 40 'reis' if I remember rightly [about \$5]. The bag was very heavy, because in those days we had the other coinage. So on the 14th I told my husband that it would be better to go and take the money to Ti Marto. When we arrived, we found Senhora Rosa and Father Ferreira there, too. I can still see him leaning against the wall. I was even rather rude, because I

went straight up to Senhor Marto and gave him the money instead of to Father, as I should have done. But Jacinta's father absolutely refused to accept it:

"Don't try me anymore, woman, I'm tried enough already!" Then I gave it to Lucia's mother but she said angrily: "God forbid! I don't want it either...."

I was getting upset by this time and turned to Father Ferreira, and offered it to him. He refused absolutely to take the money. It might have had a curse on it. Then I saw red, too:

"I won't have it either," I declared. "I'll go out and put it back where I found it!" Then Father Ferreira tried to calm me and said:

"Don't do that, woman, keep it, or give it to someone to take care of until we see what comes of all this."

Some days later four men arrived and asked me for the money to begin the building of a chapel. I told them that I wouldn't give them a penny of it, but afterwards I thought that I shouldn't have done that without asking Father Ferreira. He told me that he didn't want to have anything to do with it but that, personally, he wouldn't give it to them as they had no right to ask. He told me to do as I liked, and said that what I had done so far was all right. And so the muddle over the money continued. Those whom I offered it to, wouldn't take it, and those who wanted it didn't get it!

## CHAPTER 7

### 4th Apparition - August 19th

This went on until the 19th of August. It was a Sunday and I went to Mass as usual. Afterwards I saw Lucia's father in the square. Lucia was playing there, too. I thought I would take the opportunity to try and straighten things out. People had warned me to be careful of him because he was often drunk and had been heard to say if he could catch me in the Cova he'd soon put things right, etc. So I went up to him and saw at once that he was sober. After greeting him I said:

"I think you are annoyed because I go on to your ground at the Cova and put flowers there. I have come to ask your permission to go there." And he answered:

"Put as many flowers as you like; what I don't want is tabernacles on my land. Someone has already asked me, and I wouldn't give permission on account of the children getting into those crowds. If they're lying then they can look after themselves; and if they're not—well, then it doesn't matter what happens, crowds or no crowds." I thought he was taking it well, all things considered, and I had confidence in Our Lady.

"Someone told me," he continued, "that you took a lot of money away from my land, but I don't want it."

"Nor do I," I said."

"What are you going to do with it, then?"

"I don't know. Perhaps I'd better have Masses said for the intentions of the people who gave it." At that moment the idea came into my head to ask Lucia to ask Our Lady what she wanted done with the money. She told me not to worry, and that on the day of the next apparition in September she would ask about it. That was a great weight off my mind.

Maria had no way of knowing that day, how promptly an answer would come. On that very Sunday, the children went to the Cova da Iria to say the Rosary, after Mass in the Fatima church. There were several others who came along, among them Lucia's sister, Teresa, her husband, and a gentleman from nearby Moita whose name was Senhor Alves. A good man, the Senhor had asked the children to be his guests at lunch when they had finished with their prayers.

No one objected to this kind invitation except Lucia's mother, who complained that her daughter's pre-occupation with such a gay program might cause her to neglect pasturing the sheep in the cool, late afternoon. Lucia, however, was back in Aljustrel on time, with Francisco, Jacinta, and their oldest brother, John. Jacinta was called into the house by her mother, while the others went off with the sheep.

They chose this day the little property called Valinhos. It belonged to one of Lucia's uncles and is not much farther from Aljustrel than a man can hit a golf ball. It is just a flat and green field, rimmed with rocks, lovely and wild with flowers in the summer.

It was about four o'clock when Lucia first noticed the strange atmospheric changes in the air that had preceded the earlier apparitions in the Cova da Iria. There was a sudden freshening of the air. The hard glare of the sunlight died. There was, unscheduled, and contrary to the fair afternoon, a dramatic flash of lightning.[\[21\]](#) Our Lady, Lucia thought; who else could it be? The freshened air whipped anxious hope alive. Francisco stood still, his large eyes wide with expectation. He did not speak. He only waited. His brother, John, looked puzzled, uncertain, until Lucia spoke with sudden excitement.

"John—please go get Jacinta! Our Lady's coming—please!"

There was no action from John. He wanted to see this wondrous, celebrated Lady, too. He had no intention of being cheated out of that.

"I'll give you money, John—here. Take this and there will be more when you come back. I have to have Jacinta here."

A practical fellow, John pocketed the money first, then sprinted for home and his little sister. His mother met him at the door.

"All this excitement? Why?" Olimpia wanted to know.

"Lucia wants Jacinta to go to Valinhos, Mama—right away. It's important. Very important, Mama."

"Lucia is a priest or something? She must always have her sacristan?"

"It isn't that, honest. Lucia says she has seen signs Our Lady is coming. She gave me money, even. Here, look; just to come for Jacinta."

Just how impressed Olimpia was at this moment has not been recorded. But she did say to her son, "Go with God, my boy; Jacinta is at her godmother's house." And her own curiosity took her after them toward Valinhos. However, she delayed on the way and did not arrive in time. As for John, he has testified that his only tangible profit was the cash in his hand. He saw no miraculous Lady, although he later professed to have heard some strange sound like a rocket's ascent, when Lucia at the conclusion of this apparition, called out, "Look, Jacinta—she's going away!"

But for the privileged children, here, in the plain field called Valinhos, it was gloriously real. A few moments after Jacinta's arrival, their Lady appeared above a tree a little taller than the holm oak at the Cova da Iria. Beholding her, they went into ecstasy. And, as always, it was only Lucia who spoke in that flat, repeated formula that never seems equal to these great occasions.

"What do you want of me?"

And Our Lady's unvarying first reply: "Come again to the Cova da Iria on the thirteenth and to continue to say the Rosary every day."

Again Lucia requested the Lady to bring to these hills a miracle so that all would know she came from Heaven. Please do this, she requested, since they were so tired and so punished from being disbelieved.

"I will," the Lady promised. "In the last month, I will perform a miracle so that all may believe."

"Yes," said Lucia, "yes"; then remembering the request of Maria da Capelinha, she asked, "What are we to do with the offerings of money that people leave at the Cova da Iria?"

"I want you to have two litters made," the Lady instructed, "for the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. I want you and Jacinta to carry one of them with two other girls. You will dress in white. And then I want Francisco, with three boys helping him, to carry the other one. What is left over can be used to help towards the construction of a chapel that is to be built here."

Lucia accepted these instructions humbly and thankfully, then fervently asked for the cure of the sick who had begged her intercession.

"Some I will cure during the year," the Lady said; then gazing down at them, she added, sadly, "Pray, pray very much. Make sacrifices for sinners. Many souls go to Hell, because there are none to sacrifice themselves and to pray for them."

That was all, and the Lady left them, rising in the air—moving steadily, steadily toward the east until she was gone, or at least unseen, in the distant sky.

Ordinarily, in the Cova da Iria, when the people in heedless hunger for souvenirs, had grasped and torn at the leaves and twigs of the little oak, the children had challenged their bad manners and reproved them. But today, at Valinhos, they were the ones who, for reasons of their own, cut from the tree and carried away the branch on which their Lady's white mantle had rested. Jacinta and Francisco gained possession of the precious branch, and leaving Lucia and John to care for the sheep, they hurried home in triumph. At the Santos house, standing in front of the door with their neighbors, they found Lucia's mother and her sister, Maria dos Anjos, who has described this scene for us:

Jacinta, all excited, rushed up to my mother and said, "Oh, Aunt, we saw Our Lady again! We saw her at Valinhos!"

"Ah, Jacinta," my mother said, "when will these lies ever end. Do you have to be seeing Our Lady all over creation? Wherever you go?"

"But we saw her," Jacinta insisted, then held forth the branch she was holding in her hands. "Look, Aunt, please—this is where Our Lady put one foot, and here is where the other foot was."

"Let me see it, let me see it," my mother said.

She took the branch and held it close to her face. Puzzled, she said, "What smell is this? It is not the smell of roses, but it is very lovely. What could it be?"

Naturally, we were all curious. All of us smelled the branch, and all of us found the scent of it very pleasant. After a while my mother took it inside and placed it on a table.

"It had better stay here," she told us, "until we are able to find someone who can tell us what it is."

But that evening, I remember, we could not find the branch when we wanted it. We did not know who had taken it. Still, I remember that my mother was impressed, and I think it was from then on that she began to be kinder to Lucia. My father softened, too, so that both of them defended Lucia from then on, when others tried to torment her. Leave Lucia in peace, they used to tell us, for what she says might after all be true.

Actually, there was never a mystery of the missing branch. The adroit and agile Jacinta took it without apology when her aunt's back was turned, and brought it home to her parents, for whom she had intended it all along. Ti Marto recalls that late afternoon:

That afternoon I had made an inspection of the land and around sunset I started home. I was almost there when a man came up to me and said, "Well, Ti Marto, I see that the miracle business is going well."

"What do you mean?" I said.

"Why, Our Lady has just appeared again to your little ones and Abobora's girl. I tell you, Ti Marto, there is something special about your Jacinta. She wasn't with the other two at first, and it was only when they called her, that Our Lady appeared."

To this I did not know what to say. I merely walked into my own yard to think it over. My wife was not there. I walked into the kitchen then and sat down. Then who should come in but Jacinta, looking gay as a bird, and she is carrying a branch, about so big, in her hands.

"Papa! Papa!" she said. "Our Lady appeared to us this afternoon at Valinhos."

Even while she was saying this I could smell a more beautiful essence than I can describe. I reached for the branch and said to Jacinta, "What is this?"

"It is the branch Our Lady stood upon," she said.

I raised it to my face, but, strangely now, the smell of it was gone.

The children's love for God and His Mother was sustained by grace and multiplied by grace through many weeks of trial. I grant it is not easy to believe that children of their years would deliberately annihilate self and the sensory appetites which mature and heroic saints have chosen as the steepest but briefest ascent to God. Yet believe it, for Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta did willingly accept this ladder of pain.

"Pray, pray very much," the Mother of God had said.

"Make sacrifices for sinners. Many souls go to Hell because no one is willing to sacrifice themselves and to pray for them."

The statement was unadorned. It remained uncompromised by further explanation. "Do this," the Lady was saying. "It is a great and good and loving thing to do. It will please God who is Love."

They became, of their free will, co-redeemers with Christ. The vision of Hell that they had seen in July was not erased from their minds. They prayed incessantly. They sought new sacrifice. For hours at a time, in the Cabeco where first the angel had appeared to them, they addressed to God the angel's prayer:

"Oh, my God I believe, I adore, hope and I love Thee. I ask forgiveness for those who do not believe, nor adore, nor hope, nor love Thee."

Until, too long prostrated on the ground, the pain exceeded their endurance, they would rise, and with fervor undiminished begin the Rosary, never forgetting, between the decades, the prayer their Lady had prescribed:

"Oh, my Jesus, forgive us our sins, and deliver us from the fire of Hell. Take all souls to Heaven especially those who are most in need."

In secrecy, and without service to vanity, they practiced mortifications which seem to emulate the almost legendary self-denials of the Fathers of the desert. They wished to jam the gates of Heaven with people who might otherwise not find the way. Only God could tell you to what extent they succeeded.

Lucia, who alone of the children has survived, has been modest in describing these penances. Her manuscripts, written under obedience, place the accent of heroism on Jacinta, but they clearly enough illumine the activities of all.

Long periods of thirst provided an almost constant mortification. In the scorching summer of the serra, when through the bright hours of the day the heat hangs like a hot stove everywhere, they abstained from taking any water.

Once, returning from the Cova da Iria, they passed a pond belonging to a family named Carreira. It was a dirty pool of water where some women washed their clothes and others brought their animals to drink. Jacinta was weak from ordeal: her throat and her lips were parched.

"My head aches so, Lucia; I'm terribly thirsty, I think I'll take some of this."

"Not from here, Jacinta, please. My mother forbids it, anyhow. She says it might make me ill. We can go and get good drinking water."

"I don't want to drink good water." The little girl was determined. "If I must drink something I will take this water and offer it to our Lady."

The refusal of fresh fruit, with its nourishment and thirst-killing juices, was another means of self-denial. Lucia tells of Jacinta accepting grapes and figs from her mother, concealing, rather than consuming them, then giving them to children they met along the road. And finally, there was the penitential cord that each child wore.

This practice began when Lucia found a length of abandoned rope. Experimenting with it, as a child will, and wrapping it around one arm, she noted the pain its tension brought. She thought about this for a little while, then spoke to the others.

"This is something we could use as a sacrifice," she said.

"We can knot cords like this and wear them around our waists."

It may not seem to many a happy thought, but it is a documented record of Fatima that a tightened cord around each of their waists was a daily chastisement. Even at night they did not spare themselves until Our Lady, during the September apparition, told them they must not wear the cords to bed.

## CHAPTER 8

### 5th Apparition - September 13th

Now, in September, exhausted by trial, the children thirsted for the consolation of their Lady. There was no comparable nourishment. All hope and faith and love were one with the Lady who came dressed in the light of her Son. A scathing disrespect for the apparitions continued to thrive in Aljustrel, even though, beyond the parish, the faithful multiplied. The courage and constancy of the children before the mayor had affected many, as had the strange phenomena of light observed in the Cova da Iria the month before.

Today the pilgrims came in rather remarkable array, and by noontime there were 30,000 in the crude, natural bowl of the Cova da Iria. Even at dawn the roads near Fatima were reported blocked with the faithful, most of them devoutly reciting their beads.

It was a pilgrimage really worthy of the name (a witness has told us). It was a profoundly moving sight. I had not in all my life seen such a demonstration of faith. At the place of the apparitions, all the men had removed their hats. Nearly everyone knelt and said the Rosary with clear devotion.

A young seminarist of the time, present in the Cova with a group of his fellow students, has recalled the day for us:

On the 13th of September our long vacation was nearly over and we didn't want to go back to the seminary without having visited this place of which we had heard so much. A group of four or five of us set out on foot to see what would happen.

We returned, tired but very happy. There were quite a number of seminarists in Fatima that day—some thirty, perhaps from various seminaries. And this should not have been surprising, because the same idea brought all of them there.

For a long time we went along, jumping from rock to rock and climbing walls and stiles, watching everything that went on and talking about it among ourselves. One of the priests, however, called us over to him, and warned us to be prudent about this affair. It could all be of diabolical origin, he explained, and,

in any event, it would most likely end in a great fiasco. That was the attitude of most priests, anyhow.

Among the Catholic clergy present in the Cova da Iria that day was Monsignor John Quaresma, Vicar General of the diocese of Leiria, who later became a member of the Canonical Inquiry into Fatima instituted by the bishop. A letter written by him in 1932, gives a detailed and moving description of the impressions he carried away:

Fifteen years have passed since the extraordinary events of Fatima. Heavy clouds hung over Portugal and her people, while sadness and despair reigned in our country. In the midst of this darkness innumerable prayers were offered to God, asking for help and for mercy.

Men hoped for a ray of light in the storm which human passions had provoked. The Lord heard the prayer of His servants, and in the sky of Fatima there appeared, like the rainbow after the flood, a vision of Peace. The vision spoke to three children, and at once the terrible clouds began to disperse and souls breathed again as the burden of sadness was laid aside. Eyes, longing for the light, searched the skies where the morning star shone.

Now, may it not be that these simple children were mistaken? May they not have been victims of an illusion? Yet it is always possible that Our Lady may come to earth to bring us a message. Could there be some truth in what the children said? How explain these ever-growing multitudes that filled the Cova every thirteenth day of the month declaring that they witnessed extraordinary phenomena?

So on a beautiful September morning we left Leiria in a rickety carriage drawn by an old horse, for the spot where the much-discussed apparitions were said to take place. Father Gois found the dominating point of the vast amphitheatre from which we could observe events, without approaching too nearly the place where the children were awaiting the apparition.

At midday there was complete silence. One only heard the murmur of prayers. Suddenly there were sounds of jubilation and voices praising the Blessed Virgin. Arms were raised pointing to something in the sky. "Look, don't you see?"

"Yes, yes, I do... !" Much satisfaction on the part of those who do. There had not been a cloud in the deep blue of the sky and I, too, raised my eyes and scrutinized it in case I should be able to distinguish what the others, more fortunate than I, had already claimed to have seen.

With great astonishment I saw, clearly and distinctly, a luminous globe, which moved from the east to the west, gliding slowly and majestically through space. My friend also looked, and had the good fortune to enjoy the same

unexpected and delightful vision. Suddenly the globe, with its extraordinary light, disappeared.

Near us was a little girl dressed like Lucia, and more or less the same age. She continued to cry out happily: "I still see it! I still see it! Now it's coming down...!"

After a few minutes, about the duration of the apparitions, the child began to exclaim again, pointing to the sky: "Now it's going up again!"—and she followed the globe with her eyes until it disappeared in the direction of the sun. "What do you think of that globe?" I asked my companion, who seemed enthusiastic at what he had seen. "That it was Our Lady," he replied without hesitation.

It was my undoubted conviction also. The children had contemplated the very Mother of God, while to us it had been given to see the means of transport—if one may so express it—which brought her from Heaven to the inhospitable waste of the Serra da Aire. I must emphasize that all those around us appeared to have seen the same thing, for one heard manifestations of joy and praises of our Lady. But some saw nothing. Near us was a simple devout creature, crying bitterly because she had seen nothing.

We felt remarkably happy. My companion went from group to group in the Cova and afterwards on the road, gathering information. Those he questioned - were of all sorts and kinds, and of different social standing, but one and all affirmed the reality of the phenomena which we ourselves had witnessed.

With immense satisfaction we set off for home after this pilgrimage to Fatima, firmly resolved to return on the 13th of October for further confirmation of these facts.

The impressions of Monsignor Quaresma on this day were confirmed by thousands of eyewitnesses who beheld the identical phenomena This is not carelessly stated. It is legitimately known. Other manifestations, strange and moving, were observed by many but not by all. The sudden freshening of the atmosphere that had attended prior apparitions, the midday sun paling strangely until stars were visible in the daytime sky; a falling of flower petals that somehow disintegrated and were gone before they could reach the earth.

As for Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco, it had been a busy day. From the first hours of daylight the Marto and Santos houses had been overrun by petitioning pilgrims who had come all kinds of distances to lay their miseries and afflictions before the mercy of the Lady of Fatima. Lucia, in her memoirs, has recalled for us the hour of departure for the Cova da Iria:

When the time came, I left with Jacinta and Francisco, but we were surrounded by so many people that we could hardly move along. The roads were

packed, and it seemed as if everyone wanted to see us and speak to us. There was no human respect whatsoever. Simple folk, and even ladies and gentlemen, struggled to break through the crowd to reach us, and when they succeeded, they would fall on their knees before us, begging us to place their petitions before Our Lady. Many who couldn't get close to us, shouted from a distance.

"For the love of God," I can remember one saying, "Ask our Lady to cure my crippled son!"

"And mine who is deaf!" another would shout. "And mine who is blind!"

It went on like that. They asked to have their sons and husbands brought back from the war. They asked for the conversion of some particular sinner. They asked for the cure of consumption. They asked for everything. Every ailment of humanity seemed to be paraded before us. Some climbed up into trees or to the tops of the walls to see us go by. Closer by, we tried to answer some of the people and to help others out of the dust where they were kneeling. We would not have been able to move at all if some hadn't worked hard to keep an opening in the crowd.

It was almost time now, and they came down through the crowd to the cleared space by the little oak tree. They knelt on the ground, then Lucia, her rosary in hand, began to lead the prayers. The responses of the faithful came in cadenced and increasing volume:

"Holy Mary, Mother of God...."

Now, while the beads were being told, the crowd could see the children rise from their knees and face to the east, and see the wonder come alive upon their faces. A moment while the children waited, watching, watching, their eyes on the oak tree now, their joy like a flame. They had fallen to their knees again, and people, close to Lucia, heard her say:

"What do you want of me?"

But for Lucia and her cousins there were no people. Their senses could not wholly accommodate the Queen of Heaven standing in gentle courtesy above them. There was room for nothing more. Neither smiling nor grave, the Lady gave her simple, direct, and unadorned instructions:

"Continue the Rosary, my children. Say it every day that the war may end. In October Our Lord will come, as well as Our Lady of Dolors and Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Saint Joseph will appear with the Child Jesus to bless the world."

The Lady paused. Her triumphant beauty softened, her voice became more tenderly maternal.

"God is pleased with your sacrifices," she said, "but He does not want you to wear the cords to bed. Keep them on only in the day."

Lucia, whose eyes had been lowered during the Lady's statement of God's

approval of their sacrifices, dared now to raise her glance.

"I have the petitions of many for your help," she said.

"Will you assist a little girl who is deaf and dumb?"

"She will improve within the year," the Lady said.

"And the conversions that some have asked to have brought about? The cures of the sick ones?"

"Some I will cure," the Lady said, "and some I will not."

"In October," the Lady said, repeating her earlier promise, "I will perform a miracle so that all may believe."

The Lady said nothing more. The vision rose as before, and Lucia, beholding her Lady, called to the crowd, "If you wish to see her—look! Look!"

And they gazed, of course, as the child directed. They saw no Lady, but many did see the radiant globule of light that marked her path from the wretched little oak tree to the firmament, of which she was the Queen. In wonder they watched the ball of light move down the valley, gradually rising until it appeared to have joined the light of the sun itself. After a silence, their emotions overflowed, and the crowd-noise poured like a wild surf over the parched heights of the serra. The children's parents struggled to salvage them from the pressing weight of the mob. Long hours after, until and beyond the welcome fall of night, the frantically faithful besieged the three small children in their homes at Aljustrel.

In the September days that followed the fifth apparition, Aljustrel became a kind of religious center for many. The questions asked were for the most part irrelevant or irrational, serving no clear purpose in Heaven or Portugal, except to try the patience of the children and their parents.

It was around this time, that the bewildered young seers acquired an intelligent, unemotional and desperately needed friend. A priest named Dr. Manuel Formigao, professor at the Seminary and Lyceum of Santarem, had attended the apparition of September 13. A prudent, understanding, and scholarly gentleman, he had not been much impressed with the "spiritual" aspects of what had seemed to him no more than a pious picnic. Standing about two hundred yards from the kneeling children during those moments they were in direct communication with the Mother of God, Dr. Formigao had seen none of the remarkable phenomena reported by so many. The only odd thing he had observed was a diminution in the light of the sun, and he had been able, reasonably, to attribute this to the height of the serra.

The one thing to puncture the doctor's skeptical reserve was the actual conduct of the children in their dramatic circumstance. Their manner, their unaffected reverence, their apparent sincerity and lack of theatrical sham—all these remained in his mind like memoranda pinned there by an angel. For this

reason alone, on September 27, he returned to see them again. A record of his first conversation with Francisco follows:

"What have you seen in the Cova da Iria during these months?"

"I have seen Our Lady."

"Where does she appear?"

"The top of an oak tree."

"Does she appear suddenly, or do you see her coming from anywhere?"

"I see her coming from the side where the sun rises and stops on the oak tree."

"Does she come slowly or quickly?"

"She always comes quickly."

"Do you hear what she says to Lucia?"

"No."

"Do you ever speak to the Lady? Has she ever spoken to you?"

"No, I have never asked her anything. She only speaks to Lucia."

"Who does she look at? At you and Jacinta or only at Lucia?"

"She looks at all three of us, but she looks longer at Lucia."

"Did she ever cry or smile?"

"Neither, she is always serious."

"How is she dressed?"

"She has a long dress, and over it a mantle which covers her head and falls to the edge of her dress."

"What is the color of the dress and the mantle?"

"It is white, and the dress has gold lines."

"What is her attitude?"

"Like someone praying. She has her hands joined at the height of her breast."

"Does she carry anything in her hands?"

"Round the palm and the back of her right hand she carries a rosary."

"And what does she wear on her ears?"

"You cannot see her ears, because they are covered by the mantle."

"Is the Lady beautiful?"

"Yes, she is."

"More beautiful than that girl over there?"

"Yes."

"But there are ladies who are much more beautiful than that girl?"

"She was more beautiful than anyone I have ever seen."

After I had finished questioning Francisco (continues Dr. Formigao), I called Jacinta, who was playing in the road with some other children, and sitting her on a little stool at my side, I subjected her to a similar interrogation, and succeeded

in obtaining complete and detailed replies as in the case of her brother:

"Have you seen Our Lady on the 13th of each month since May?"

"Yes."

"Where does she come from?"

"She comes from the sky from the side of the sun."

"How is she dressed?"

"She has a white dress, decorated with gold, and on her head a mantle, also white."

"What color is her hair?"

"You cannot see her hair, because it is covered by the mantle."

"Does she wear earrings?"

"I don't know, because you cannot see her ears."

"How does she hold her hands?"

"Her hands are joined at the height of her breast, with the fingers pointing upwards."

"Are the beads in the right or the left hand?"

To this question the child replied at first that they were in the right hand, but just after, owing to a purposely captious insistence on my part, she became perplexed and confused and was not able to indicate with certainty the hand in which the Vision had held the rosary.

"What was the chief thing that Our Lady told Lucia?"

"She said that we were to say the Rosary every day."

"And do you say it?"

"I say it every day with Francisco and Lucia."

Half an hour after this interrogation (Dr. Formigao's report continues), Lucia appeared. She came from a little property belonging to her family where she had been helping with the vintage.

Taller and better nourished than the other two, with a clearer skin and a more robust, healthier appearance, she presented herself before me with an unselfconsciousness which contrasted in a marked manner with the shyness and timidity of Jacinta. Simply dressed, like the latter, neither her attitude nor her expression denoted a sign of vanity, still less of confusion.

Seating herself on a chair at my side, in response to my gesture, she willingly consented to be questioned on the events in which she was the principal protagonist, in spite of the fact that she was visibly fatigued and depressed by the incessant visits and the repeated and lengthy questionings to which she was subjected.

"Is it true that Our Lady has appeared in a place called the Cova da Iria?"

"Yes, it is true."

"How many times has she appeared to you?"

"Five times, once each month."

"On what day of the month?"

"Always on the 13th, except in the month of August, when I was taken to Ourem by the mayor. In that month I only saw her a few days afterwards, on the 19th, at Valinhos."

"People say that Our Lady also appeared to you last year? Is there any truth in this?"

"She never appeared to me last year, never before May of this year; nor did I ever say so to anybody, because it is not true."

"Where does she come from? From the east?"

"I don't know because I don't see her come from anywhere. She appears over the oak tree and when she goes away she goes into the sky in the direction where the sun rises."

"How long does she stay? A long or a short time?"

"A short time."

"Enough to be able to recite an Our Father and Hail Mary, or more?"

"A good deal more, but it is not always the same time; perhaps it would not be long enough to say a Rosary."

"The first time you saw her were you frightened?"

"I was, so much so that I wanted to run away with Jacinta and Francisco, but she told us not to be afraid because she would not hurt us."

"How is she dressed?"

"She has a white dress, which reaches to her feet, and her head was covered with a mantle, the same color and the same length."

"Has the dress anything on it?"

"You can see, in the front, two gold cords which fall from the neck and are joined at the waist by a tassel, also gold."

"Is there any belt or ribbon?"

"No."

"Her earrings?"

"They are little rings."

"In which hand does she hold the rosary?"

"In the right hand."

"Is it a rosary of five or fifteen decades?"

"I didn't notice."

"Had it a cross?"

"Yes, a white cross and the beads, too, were white; so was the chain."

"Did you ever ask who she was?"

"I did, but she said she would only tell us on the 13th of October."

"Did you ask her where she came from?"

"I did, and she told me that she came from Heaven."

"When did you ask her this?"

"The second time, on the 13th of June."

"Did she smile sometimes, or was she sad?"

"She neither smiled, nor was she sad; she was always serious."

"Did she tell you and your cousins to say certain prayers?"

"She told us to say the Rosary in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary, to obtain the peace of the world."

"Did she say that many people were to be present in the Cova da Iria during the apparitions of the 13th?"

"She said nothing about that."

"Is it true that she told you a secret that you were not to tell to anybody at all?"

"Yes."

"Does it only concern you or your cousins also?"

"It concerns all three of us."

"Could you not tell it even to your confessor?"

At this question Lucia was silent and appeared confused. I judged it better not to insist by repeating the question.

"In order to free yourself from the mayor on the day he imprisoned you, did you tell him something as if it were the secret, thus deceiving him and boasting of it afterwards?"

"That is not true. Senhor Santos really did want me to reveal the secret, but I could not, and did not do so, although he tried in every way to make me do what he wanted. I told the mayor everything that the Lady had said to me except the secret. Perhaps it was because of this that he thought I had told him the secret too. I never wanted to deceive him."

"Did the Lady tell you to learn to read?"

"Yes, the second time she appeared."

"But if she told you that she would take you to Heaven in October next, what would be the good of learning to read?"

"That is not true. The Lady never said that she would take me to Heaven in October, and I never told anyone that she had said such a thing."

"What did the Lady say was to be done with the money which the people left under the oak tree in the Cova da Iria?"

"She said that we were to make two litters and that I and Jacinta and two more girls were to carry one, and Francisco with three more boys the other, to

the parish church. Part of this money was to be for the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary and the rest to help to build a new chapel."

"Where does the Lady want the chapel built? In the Cova da Iria?"

"I don't know; she didn't say."

"Are you glad that Our Lady appeared to you?"

"Yes."

"On the 13th of October will Our Lady come alone?"

"St. Joseph and the Holy Child will come, and a little time afterwards the world will have peace."

"Did Our Lady reveal anything more?"

"She said that on the 13th of October she would perform a miracle so that the people can believe that she appeared."

"Why do you often lower your eyes, instead of keeping them on the Lady?"

"Because she sometimes blinds me."

"Did she teach you any prayer?"

"Yes, and she wants us to recite it after each mystery of the Rosary."

"Do you know this prayer by heart?"

"Yes."

"Say it."

"O my Jesus, forgive us our sins and deliver us from the fire of Hell. Take all souls to Heaven, especially those who are most in need."

Dr. Formigao returned to his seminary at Santarem, pondering seriously and prayerfully the strange case of the children of Aljustrel. For better or worse he believed them. He was convinced they told the truth, at least as they saw the truth, which did not exclude a possibility that in all their honesty, they were yet the victims of hallucination. Indeed the doctor in his charity would have allowed it altogether possible to be both virtuous and crazy.

Yet he did not think they were crazy; and he did not believe they had lied. Consistent with the priestly responsibility he felt, he resolved to visit the children at least once more before the scheduled "miracle" of October 13. He travelled as far as Vila Nova de Ourem by train and completed the journey to Fatima by horse-drawn carriage. He arrived too late to question the children, and for that reason spent the night with a family named Goncalves. Manuel Goncalves, the eldest son of the house, and a man of bright good sense, was able to supply him with information about the families of the children. Happily this dialogue has been preserved and is presented intact. Dr. Formigao is the first to speak.

"Have the parents of these children a good name? Are they respectable, decent living people?"

"The parents of Jacinta and Francisco are very good people, profoundly religious and well thought of by everybody. Lucia's father is not a churchgoer, but he is not at all a bad man. On the thirteenth of June some of his more disreputable friends succeeded in making him drunk in the hope of getting him to commit some folly or other in the place of the apparitions, and although he had allowed his daughter to go to the place as usual, he ordered the other people off, as proprietor of the ground where the oak tree grows. When the people saw that he was drunk, they took no notice of his order, but a man pushed him so that he fell to the ground. The mother is a pious hard-working woman."

"What do the inhabitants of Fatima think of the children's affirmations? Do they believe them? Do they think they are lying, or perhaps victims of a hallucination?"

"At first the people did not want to go to the Cova. No one believed the children. On the 13th of June, the day of the second apparition, there was a feast in the parish in honor of St. Anthony. In the Cova there were only about seventy people at the time of the apparition. The parents of Jacinta and Francisco had gone in the morning to Porto de Mos for the so-called 'Fair of the thirteenth,' with the intention of buying oxen and returning at night. In their absence the house filled up with people who wanted to see the children and question them. At present a large proportion of the people think that the children are speaking the truth. For my own part I am convinced of this."

"On the days of the apparitions are there extraordinary signs? Many people claim to have seen them."

"The signs are very numerous. In August almost everyone who was present saw them. A cloud came down on the oak tree. In July the same thing was seen, and there was no dust. The cloud seemed to sweep the air clean."

"Were there any other signs?"

"In the sky, near the sun, there were some white clouds which turned successively bright red (the color of blood), pink and yellow. The people themselves turned this last color. The light of the sun sensibly diminished in intensity, and in July and August a noise was heard."

"Is it possible that anyone could have induced the children to play a hoax?"

"That would be impossible!"

"Have many people come from outside to talk to the children?"

"Innumerable people from all parts."

"Do they accept the money which is offered them?"

"They have accepted something from people who insist, but they do not accept it willingly."

"Are there people in Fatima who have been close to the children during the

apparitions?"

"In July, Jacinto Lopes da Amoreira and Manual de Oliveira from this village of Montelo, were near them.'

"What does Lucia do during the apparitions?"

"She says the Rosary. When she speaks to the Lady she speaks loudly. I myself heard her in June, because I was near her. Some people say that they heard the sound of the reply."

"Is the place of the apparitions much frequented on the other days?"

"Yes, many people go there, especially on Sundays, and mostly at night. People come from far and near, even more from outside the parish. They say the Rosary and sing hymns in honor of Our Lady."

After this conversation, Dr. Formigao went to Aljustrel, where he found Lucia helping a mason who was repairing the roof. He has also noted that the following interview was attended by four responsible witnesses.

As soon as she saw me (he says), she greeted me respectfully. Her mother appeared at that moment, and willingly consented to my questioning her daughter again. First, however, I asked her a few questions, among which the following may be of interest:

"I think that you have a book called Short Mission, which you sometimes read to your children. Is that so?"[\[22\]](#) "Yes, I have read it to my children."

"Have you ever read about the apparition of La Salette to Lucia or to the other children?"

"Only to Lucia and the family."

"Did Lucia ever speak about the apparition of La Salette, or show in any way that the story had made a great impression on her mind?"

"I don't remember her ever having mentioned it." Now Dr. Formigao resumes his questioning of Lucia: "You told me some days ago that Our Lady wanted the money given by the people to be used for the parish church for two litters. How are these to be obtained, and when are they to be taken to the church?"

"They must be bought with the money which is given on the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary."

"Do you know for certain where Our Lady wants the chapel in her honor to be built?"

"I don't know for certain, but I think she wants the chapel in the Cova da Iria."

"What did she say that she would do in order that people might believe?"

"She said that she would perform a miracle."

"When did she say this?"

"She said it several times, but once, during the first apparition, I asked her."

[23]

"Are you not afraid of what the people will do if nothing extraordinary happens on that day?"

"I am not at all afraid."

"Do you feel something inside you, some force which draws you to the Cova da Iria on the 13th of each month?"

"I feel I want to go there, and I should be sad if I didn't."

"Did you ever see the Lady make the sign of the cross, pray, or tell the beads?"

"No."

"Did she tell you to pray?"

"She told me to pray several times."

"Did you see the signs which other people said they saw, such as a star, or roses falling from the Lady's dress?"

"I didn't see a star nor any other signs."

"Did you hear any noise or an earthquake?"

"No, I heard nothing."

"Can you read?"

"No "

"Are you learning?"

"No."

"Then you are not doing what Our Lady wants?..." [24] Lucia did not reply to this.

"When you tell the people to kneel and pray is it the Lady who tells you to?"

"No, it is not the Lady. I tell them to."

"Do you always kneel when she appears?"

"Sometimes I kneel, sometimes I stand."

"When she speaks is her voice sweet and agreeable?"

"Yes."

"How old is the Lady?"

"She looks about fifteen years old."

"What color is the rosary chain?"

"White."

"And the crucifix?"

"White too."

"Does the veil cover the forehead of the Lady?"

"It does not cover it; you can see her forehead."

"Is the light which surrounds her very beautiful?"

"More beautiful than the most brilliant light of the sun."

"Did the Lady ever greet you with her head or with her hands?"

"Never."

"Did she ever laugh?"

"Never."

"Does she usually look at the people?"

"I never saw her look at them,"

"Do you hear the voices and the cries of the people while you are talking to the Lady?"

"No."

"Did the Lady ask you in May to come back every month until October to the Cova-da Iria?"

"She said we were to come back from month to month on the 13th for six months."

"Do you remember your mother reading a book called Short Mission, where there is a story of an apparition of Our Lady to a girl?"

"Yes."

"Did you think much about this story, or speak about it to other children?"

"I never thought about this story, and I never talked about it to anyone."

After hearing Lucia, Dr. Formigao went to Senhor Marto's house, and in his presence, and before some of his daughters, he questioned Jacinta.

"Did the Lady tell you to say the Rosary?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"When she appeared the first time."

"Did you hear the secret or was it only Lucia who heard?"

"I heard too."

"When? "

"At the second apparition on St. Anthony's day."

"Is the secret that you will be rich?"

"No."

"That you will be good and happy?"

"Yes, it is for the good of all three of us."

"Is it that you will go to Heaven?"

"No."

"Can you tell the secret?"

"I can't."

"Why?"

"Because the Lady said we were not to tell it to anyone."

"If the people knew it, would they be sad?"

"Yes."

"How did the Lady have her hands?"

"She had them stretched out."

"Always?"

"Sometimes she turned the palms up to Heaven."

"In May did the Lady say she wanted you to go to the Cova da Iria again?"

"She said she wanted us to go there each month until October, when she would say what she wanted."

"Has she light around her head?"

"Yes."

"Can you look easily at her face?"

"No, because it hurts my eyes."

"Do you always hear well, what the Lady says?"

"Last time I couldn't hear everything, because of the noise the people were making." Then came Francisco's turn:

"How old are you?"

"Nine years old."

"Do you only see Our Lady, or do you also hear what she says?"

"I only see her. I can't hear anything she says."

"Has she light around her head?"

"Yes."

"Can you look well at her face?"

"I can look, but only a little because of the light."

"Has her dress some decoration?"

"It has some cords of gold."

"What color is the crucifix?"

"White."

"And the chain of the rosary?"

"White, too."

"Would the people be sad if they knew the secret?"

"Yes."

Dr. Formigao had gone as far as he chose to go. It was too much for him. In the face of such calm and candid testimony, it was not possible for his own skepticism, or any ghost of it, to thrive any longer. It would be for Mary, the Queen of Heaven, to confirm with her signature the story of these children, or else, by her non-intervention on October 13, to reject as nonsense, all the wonders they had claimed.

## CHAPTER 9

### "I will perform a miracle for all to see and believe"

It was exciting prediction, whether spoken by the Virgin Mary, or dreamed by her impatient little champions. Many people are interested to miracles, and to have one predicted so far in advance, to so many people, and under such circumstances even added further excitement over it.

Throughout all Portugal the story prospered. Never before had a miracle been so obligingly pinpointed on the calendar, with the month, the day and the very hour so precisely predicted. The children, if crazy, were certainly courageous. Their calm insistence was enough to shrink the scalp of a skeptic, or to send a pious, easily persuaded citizen running for his beads.

The forces of the new "enlightenment" found the situation not only amusing, but highly opportune. Here at last the sly, conniving Mother Church had gone too far, and her simple sheep, spoon-fed for centuries on superstition, were about to absorb a fatal overdose.

Avelino de Almeida, a celebrated Lisbon journalist, published a humorous article in the Seculo, in which he skillfully lampooned the whole affair. Senhor Almeida's chore for his paper, the most widely circulated in the nation, did much to advertise the scheduled "miracle" and to fatten the ranks of both the scoffers and the faithful, who would journey on October 13 to that rough and humble chalice of earth known as the Cova da Iria.

In Lucia's house, things did not go well. It is probable that in all the Christian communities of Portugal faith in the children and their Lady was nowhere so wan, emaciated and trembling as it was in their native village. It was true enough that less than a month before, in the Cova da Iria, the faith of many had soared; it was true indeed that a seemingly mystical and enchanting globule of light had hovered above the little oak tree where the children prayed, and equally true that many eyes had seen it duplicate the journey from earth to sky that Lucia described as her Lady's path. But it didn't help a great deal now. The children and their families had been warned of the wrath that would befall them if the promised miracle did not take place. Fear moved into the Santos house, and faith seemed to have departed from all but Lucia, her two little cousins, and her

steadfast uncle, Ti Marto.

My family - (Maria dos Anjos has told us) was very much concerned. As the thirteenth of the month drew closer, we kept telling Lucia that she should forget all these wild stories she had invented, because otherwise all of us would suffer. My father was difficult with her, and especially when he was drinking, he was very, very bad, except that he did not beat her. It was my mother who did that.

We kept hearing reports that if the miracle was a failure our house would be bombed. We were terror-stricken, and our neighbors believed it, too. In our fears it seems that we believed everything, and everyone, but Lucia. People advised my mother to take Lucia away, but she did not know what she should do. Certainly at this time she did not believe.

"If it is really Our Lady," my mother said, "there could have been a miracle already. She could have made a spring come up, or something like that. But, no —even when it rains in that place there is no more than a drop of water. Where will all of it end?"

Only the children remained unexcited. One day, I remember, I went to them at the well behind our house, and I said to them: "All right," I said, "when are you three going to admit that nothing happened in the Cova da Iria? People are saying that they will put down bombs to destroy our houses. Why don't you tell me the truth so I can tell Father Ferreira? He can then tell the truth to the people in the church, and all of this will be over. Shall I do that?"

Lucia frowned and said nothing to me. Only Jacinta spoke. She was crying, because I did not believe her, and I remember how little and squeaky her voice was.

"Say what you want," she told me. "Believe what you like, Maria, but we have seen the Lady; it is true!"

Lucia's mother was not having a happy time of it. A fretful woman, disposed to tears and prophecies of doom, she was convinced that assassins were lurking near, eager to pounce on her vision-addicted daughter and herself. Her husband, Antonio Santos, was no help. He would much rather have had a drink of wine, than a visit from an angel. Pointedly, and somewhat vulgarly, he had dismissed the mystical pretensions of his daughter. He was badgered and confused, and clearly unhappy with it all, and he must have had a difficult time with his wife, Maria Rosa, whose panic advanced to such a point that on October 12 she roused her daughter at dawn, demanding they go to confession—now!

"Why, Mamma?" said Lucia, sleepily.

"Because everyone says we will probably be killed tomorrow in the Cova da Iria—do you hear me? If your Lady does not perform her miracle, the people will attack us."

"Oh, Mamma—please," said Lucia.

"Kill us, I said, daughter. And so we had better go to confession. We had better be prepared."

"Well, if you must go, Mamma," Lucia said softly, "I will go with you, but not for that reason. I'm not afraid of being killed—really I am not, and besides, I know the Lady will do all that she promised to do."

Maria Rosa abandoned her pleas. As this point she gave up, less to conviction, perhaps, than to helplessness and sheer fatigue. But she managed to survive these difficult hours, and at night to find her bed, aware that tomorrow would be the momentous, decisive day.

It rained through the night and through all the following morning. The hills were drenched. The trees leaned with the weight of wind and rain. Where wagons turned and people marched, the roads were bad, the mud churned ankle-deep.

Lucia prepared for her scheduled journey to the Cova da Iria, intending first to join Francisco and Jacinta at their house. Her mother was in no mood this morning to berate her, either with words, or the handle of a broom. Evidently convinced that this was to be her youngest daughter's final day on earth, Maria Rosa had an erratic turn of disposition; she was tenderly compassionate. The pressure of events appears to have given her a new charge of courage, and she resolved, rather suddenly, that she would go with Lucia to the place of the apparitions.

"If my daughter is going to die," she announced dramatically, "I want to die with her."

Her obedient and puzzled husband joined the dismal company. They set off in the rain for the Marto household up the street, and it was here, at the Marto's, that the local commotion had reached its hysterical zenith. The calm and observing Ti Marto himself, has reviewed for us the opening scene of this highly memorable day.

The people filled our little house (Ti Marto recalls) so that you could not move an inch. Outside it was raining so heavily you could not see through the thickness of the falling water. Everywhere mud covered the ground.

Inside the house, the people were inconsiderate and wild with their fervor and their curiosity. With their muddy shoes they climbed on the furniture, and stood without apology on the beds. My poor wife! I remember her distress at this, but there was nothing we could do. I said to her, "Never mind, wife; at least it cannot get worse, for it is so crowded now that nobody else could possibly get in!"

A lady from the town of Pambalinho had come to our house with special

dresses for Lucia and my Jacinta to wear that day. The dress for Lucia was blue and Jacinta's was white. The lady dressed the girls herself, with great care.

But such excitement in the house! A neighbor came to me with great anxiousness. "Ti Marto, you must not go today," he said. "People will not hurt the children, because they are so little, but with you it is another matter."

"Yes, but I'm going," I told this man. "I'm going because I have faith in all the children have said, and I do not believe it will go badly."

This I truly believed, but with my poor wife it was not so easy. She had great devotion to Our Lady, I know, but she was impressed by all the priests and people who said it could not be as our children claimed. She was afraid, poor woman, but not Jacinta and Francisco. They were not in the least perturbed.

"Father," Jacinta said to me, "why should we worry? If we are killed, we will go to Heaven, and those poor people who sought to harm us, they will go to Hell for their sins."

So when the children were dressed and ready, we left the house, going out into such a rain as you never did see. Out on the road we began to meet people who were not cynical; indeed we began to meet those who were foolish in another way. Women, and even fine ladies, were kneeling down in the thick mud before the children as they passed.

"My good people," I said, "you must leave the children alone."

But they kept crowding closer and getting more emotional, as though these little children had the power of saints. After a long and difficult time we at last arrived at the Cova da Iria. The crowd was so thick that we could not pass through. A man who was a chauffeur picked up my Jacinta at this time and carried her into the field, shouting, "Make way for the children who saw Our Lady!" I followed them, and Jacinta, who could see me struggling among so many people, was frightened, lest something happen to me, and she cried out to the people: "Do not push my father! Do not hurt him!"

At last the chauffeur who carried her was able to reach the little oak tree and place her down, although the crush of people here was so great and frightening that Jacinta began to cry. Francisco and Lucia managed then to make their way. My wife, Olimpia, had not been able to get through, but I remember seeing Maria Rosa there.

It was at this time that I saw a man bearing down on me with a stick upraised, but before he could accomplish anything, the people nearby had closed their ranks against him, and when the great moment of that day arrived, it was quiet and orderly by the little tree.

This simple and restrained account by Ti Marto does not convey the full proportions of the first great pilgrimage to Fatima on October 13th, 1917. The

drama and the haunting mystery of the previous apparitions—at least as word-of-mouth and press accounts, had filtered through—had thrilled the spirits and heightened the hope of nearly all religious people in the land. Even the clergy—tightlipped, skeptical, and in fear of a shameful fiasco—waited tremulously, as citizens of a nation already torn by bitter religious dissent.

We have at hand a variety of newspaper accounts, taken from journals of differing political policy and tone, and while tempted to print them all, we are aware their bulk would tax the limits of this book. The following is from an article in the newspaper, *O Dia*, which we now know to have been written by Dona Madalena Patrício:

The hamlets, villages and towns in the proximity appeared to be depopulated. For days beforehand, groups of excursionists were to be seen on the way to Fatima. The fishermen from Vieira left nets and wooden houses by the sea and came swinging through the pine woods. Artisans from Marinha, farmers from Monte Real... serra folk from much further afield, from every place where news of the miracle had penetrated, the people left their houses and their fields, and came to Fatima by horse, carriage, on foot, by every means of transport. The roads through the pines and the mountains echoed during these two days, with the noise of traffic and the voices of the pilgrims.

Autumn was reddening the vines, stripped after the vintage. The cold north-west wind announced the coming of winter... and all night and into the morning a sad, drizzling rain fell. Damp and cold, it penetrated into the bones of those who, with their families and animals, were flocking along the roads which led to the miraculous mountain.

The rain fell and fell. The cotton skirts of the women dripped and hung like lead around their ankles. Water poured from the new caps and hats which had been donned in honor of the day. Boots and bare feet splashed through the muddy puddles... and up on the mountain there was what appeared to be a large dark stain—thousands upon thousands of God's creatures waiting for a miracle, a blessing, and an alleviation in the bitterness of life....

These observations cover the mass movement of pilgrims approaching Fatima from the direction of Leiria and the ancient cathedral city of Batalha. Signs of equal fervor and spiritual excitement were witnessed on the road leading into Fatima from Vila Nova de Ourem, and the following account was presented by Avelino de Almeida, serving as special reporter for the *Seculo*, the most widely read Portuguese newspaper of the day. It was Senhor Almeida whose competent hand had satirized earlier the amusing rash of "miracles" alleged to have broken out in the hills. He writes objectively and well:

On the road we can see the first groups of people making their way to the

holy place, which is about twelve miles from here.

Men and women are for the most part barefooted, the latter carrying their shoes in bags on their heads, while the men lean on thick sticks and are also prudently armed with umbrellas. Apparently indifferent to what is going on around them, they do not seem to notice the countryside, nor their fellow-travelers, but murmur the Rosary as they go along immersed in thought.

A woman recites the first part of the Ave Maria, and immediately her companions continue the second part in chorus. They move rhythmically and rapidly in order to reach the place of the apparitions before nightfall. Here, under the stars they will sleep, keeping the first and best places near the little tree.

At the entrance to the town, women of the people, apparently influenced by the atheistic tone of the place, mockingly interchange impressions on the topic of the day, while the believers pursue their way indifferent to everything alien to the object of their journey. During the night the most varied types of vehicles have arrived in the square, bringing their loads of the devout and the curious.

At daybreak fresh groups hurry through the town, and the habitual quiet is broken by singing of the most varied kind.

At sunrise the weather looks threatening. Black clouds gather exactly over Fatima but this does not deter the people who by now are flocking in from all sides, employing every means of transport. There are luxurious motor cars travelling at speed, ox carts pulled in to the side of the road, victorias, closed carriages, carts in which seats are improvised and in which not another soul could be squeezed. Everyone is provided with food, both for themselves and for the beasts... valiantly playing their part.

Here and there one sees a cart decorated with greenery, and although there is an air of discreet festivity, people are sober and well-mannered. Donkeys bray at the side of the road and the innumerable cyclists make prodigious efforts not to collide with the carts.

By ten o'clock the sky was completely hidden behind the clouds, and the rain began to fall in earnest. Swept by the strong wind and beating upon the faces of the people, it soaked the pilgrims, often without protection against the weather, to the marrow of their bones. But no one complained or turned back, and if some took shelter under trees or walls, the great majority continued on their journey with remarkable indifference to the rain.

The place where the Virgin is alleged to have appeared is fronted to a large extent by the road which leads to Leiria, along which the vehicles bringing the pilgrims are parked. But the great mass of the people congregate round the oak tree which, according to the children, is the Vision's pedestal. It can be imagined as the center of a large circle round which the spectators gather to watch events.

Seen from the road, the general effect is picturesque. The peasants, sheltering under their huge umbrellas, accompany the unloading of fodder with the singing of hymns and the recitation of the decades of the Rosary in a matter-of-fact way. People plod through the sticky clay in order to see the famous oak tree with its wooden arch and hanging lanterns, at closer quarters.

At one moment a terrified hare runs through the crowd and is hardly noticed except by half a dozen or so of small boys, who catch and kill it.

Many attempts have been made to compute the number of pilgrims who made the difficult journey to Fatima in October, 1917. Only one thing is altogether certain. It was a tragic problem such as had never beset this obscure and lonely section of the hills. Professor Garrett, of Coimbra University, has estimated a crowd of one hundred thousand, though admittedly he had no means of gauging the actual number to any fine degree. A more generally accepted figure is 70,000, a staggering total at the time. In any event, it was such a vast and unaccustomed crush of humans, that amateur statisticians attempted to count the vehicles that passed at certain points. A reporter from the paper, *Diario de Noticias*, dutifully counted 240 carts, 135 bicycles and 100 cars that returned from Fatima to Vila Nova de Ourem, and while it is true that in America today we can count 100 cars outside-of any thriving supermarket, we are speaking of Fatima, Portugal, in 1917, when an automobile was rare. Obviously this reporter did not count oxen, donkeys, horses, mules, or that primary means of transport in those days of grace, a peasant's feet.

Even on the twelfth of the month, which was the day before (Maria da Capelinha recalls), there were so many people that it was hard to believe. They made such a noise that I could hear them even as far away as my own village. They had to sleep out in the open, completely uncovered, because there was no shelter at the Cova.



## CHAPTER 10

### 6th Apparition - October 13th

Before sunrise on the thirteenth, the people were praying and singing. I came very early myself, and managed to get close to the oak tree, which was now little more than a stripped trunk of a tree, although I had decorated it with ribbons and flowers the evening before. For myself, I felt very sad that this was to be the last of Our Lady's visits, but like everyone else, I was longing to see the promised miracle.

I remember how it was that day, how difficult for the children for a while. There was a priest whom I did not know, and this priest had spent the whole night here. Just before noon, when I began to notice him, he was saying his Breviary. When the children arrived then, dressed as though for their first Communion, this priest asked them directly what time Our Lady would appear.

"At midday, Father," Lucia said.

And then the priest looked at his watch and said to Lucia,

"Listen, it is midday now. Are you trying to tell us that Our Lady is a liar? Well, child? Well?"

He was aggressive, this priest, and impatient with the children, and very suspicious. In a few minutes he looked at his watch again.

"It is past noon now," he said derisively. "Cannot all you people see that this is just a delusion? That it is nonsense? Go home, everyone, go home!"

He began to push the three little children with his hands, but Lucia would not go. She was very close to tears, yet full of faith.

"Our Lady said she would come, Father," Lucia said firmly, "and I know that she will keep her promise."

As to the miracle of Fatima about to occur, we have no obligation to guess. The documentation is thorough and complete. Through several pages to follow, the author will attempt less to describe the events than he will offer in testimony the responsible records of responsible witnesses.

Close to the stripped and wretched little oak, at the chill and sunless noontime of a soggy day, the children wait. The girls seem fragile and pathetic in their fancy clothes. Francisco's Sunday suit hangs wet and baggy on his little

frame. The strong denunciations by the unnamed priest still echo with the timbre of his rage. Lucia's father and mother are near, and many of their friends are close at hand. Ti Marto stands in watchful readiness, though his wife, Olimpia, is somewhere in the jumble of the crowd. Dr. Formigao maintains his vigil; Maria da Capelinha is here—pious, of course, and nervous, wishing perhaps to light another candle, or to hang just one more pretty ribbon in hope it will entice the Lady to appear.

The rain continues, and by the official government time it is well past one o'clock. But by sun time it is precisely noon when Lucia looks to the east. "Jacinta," she says softly, "kneel down." Then more strongly she calls, "Our Lady is coming; I have seen the lightning."

The children kneel, as do countless numbers of the faithful; but the people as yet have been stirred by no great happening. The faces of the children are mirrors of ecstasy, yet what they see is not for other eyes to know, except through the testimony of the children themselves.

Their Lady stands in unearthly beauty above the bright flowers and rain-wilted ribbons of silk that affectionate hands have fixed there in her honor. But flowers fade and sunlight pales, and every natural glory of earth withdraws its poor pretensions in her company, if we can believe her witnesses.

Now we find that by God's gift, it is almost impossible not to believe.

"What do you want of me?" asks Lucia.

The dialogue, read this way, does not seem inspired. From May to October it has been much the same. But there is this significant difference. It is Heaven and earth concerned with goodness, rather than with skills. There is no call for Dante, or for Shakespeare, or for any modern literary hand.

"I want to tell you that a chapel is to be built here in my honor. I am the Lady of the Rosary. Continue always to pray the Rosary every day. The war is going to end, and the soldiers will soon return to their homes."

There is a reverent silence. Lucia then explains, "I have many petitions from many people. Will you grant them? "

"Some yes, but not others."

This Lady of the Rosary, who is God's Mother, is gentle, but she is serious. She has never smiled. She is asking for penance. She is talking in terms of Heaven and Hell—a blunt and terrifying equation that so many have comfortably forgotten. She speaks as though after 1900 years, a cross still weighs upon the shoulders of her Son: "People must amend their lives and ask pardon for their sins. They must not offend Our Lord anymore, for He is already too much offended!"

"And is that all you have to ask?" Lucia inquires.

"There is nothing more."

### ***The Miracle of the Sun***

Now the Lady of the Rosary takes her last leave of her three small friends. She rises slowly toward the east. The children behold how she turns the palms of her gentle hands to the dark sky over them, and now, as if this is a signal, the rain has stopped; the great dark clouds that have obscured the sun and depressed the solemn day, are suddenly burst apart; they scatter; they are rent like a bombed rainbow before the eye, and the bold sun hangs unchallenged in its place, a strangely spinning disc of silver.

Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco are beholding their Lady. From her upturned hands strange rays of light are rising, as though to assault and make dim the light of the sun itself.

Lucia cries out a single time, "Look at the sun!"

But she has no recollection later of having called this out to the crowd. The Lady of the Rosary is no longer ascending. She stands in glory to the right of the sun, and her light is such that the great fixed star is by comparison pallid and weak. For a moment she is gowned in white, precisely as the children have known her each time she has appeared above the stubby oak. Yet as quickly, and as strangely then, she is wearing a mantle of blue, and with her, in fidelity to the promise she has made, is St. Joseph, with the Christ Child in his arms. St. Joseph is robed in red, and he appears to lean from the clouds, holding the Child who also is dressed in red.

These visions are brief and they succeed one another rapidly. Three times St. Joseph has traced the sign of the cross above the people. St. Joseph fades away, and Christ appears at the base of the sun. He is cloaked in red. With Him stands His Mother. She is gowned now in neither white nor blue, but as Our Lady of Sorrows, gazing on the earth. She has not the traditional sword in her heart. This the children clearly note, and are later able to recall. Christ gives his blessing to the people, and then, as this vision passes, there is one that Lucia alone is privileged to see: Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Remember, this is Lucia speaking; this is the privileged sight of three, quite different from the shocking and indisputable phenomenon that is witnessed by the crowd.

It seems strange, recounting here in simple words, such prodigies as this. There can be no attempt to describe the impact of this experience on the children. They have themselves no more succeeded in this than they have

managed fully to convey a picture of the Lady whose beauty was more than the senses, unaided, could properly comprehend.

But what of the crowd who did not see the Christ Child, or His Mother, or St. Joseph in the sky? Here the record pursues the skeptic; and inexorably, if he does not flee from the evidence, it will defeat him. The miraculous hand falls heavily. Like stones, the signs of God will be laid before you now to build a house of faith.

When Lucia cried, "Look at the sun!" the people responded. The rain at that moment had stopped; the sun was clearly seen. There was no cloud to obscure it, yet it did not strain the eyes of any man to look on its unveiled light. The people could see that the sun was strangely spinning. It began to revolve more rapidly, more frighteningly. It began to cast off beams of many-colored lights in all directions. Shafts of brilliant red came from the rim of the revolving star and fell across the earth, the people and the trees; and green lights came and violet and blue in mixed array. It is a story of wonder and of terror, too, as the great star challenges the discipline of all the ages it has known, and begins careening, trembling in the sky for seventy thousand witnesses to see. Now, horribly, it appears to plunge from its place in the Heavens and fall upon the earth. People are crying:

"I believe! I believe!"

They are shrieking, "Jesus, save us!"

They are crying, "Miracle!"

They are begging, "God forgive us our sins!"

They are praying, "Mary, save us!"

This is, of course, not our story to tell. It is the story of the seventy thousand people who were there. It appears more prudent to call them in witness, than to belabor the subject ourselves. We will start with our friend, Ti Marto, who is not an excitable man:

We looked easily at the sun, which for some reason did not blind us. It seemed to flicker on and off, first one way, then another. It cast its rays in many directions and painted everything in different colors—the trees, the people, the air and the ground. But what was most extraordinary, I thought, was that the sun did not hurt our eyes. Everything was still and quiet, and everyone was looking up. Then at a certain moment, the sun appeared to stop spinning. It then began to move and to dance in the sky until it seemed to detach itself from its place and fall upon us. It was a terrible moment.

Among our friends, Maria da Capelinha has told us pretty much the same thing:

The sun turned everything to different colors—yellow, blue and white. Then

it shook and trembled. It looked like a wheel of fire that was going to fall on the people. They began to cry out, "We shall all be killed!" Others called to Our Lady to save them. They recited acts of contrition. One woman began to confess her sins aloud, advertising that she had done this and that.... When at last the sun stopped leaping and moving, we all breathed our relief. We were still alive, and the miracle which the children had foretold, had been seen by everyone.

It must be admitted that this was not an afternoon of celestial fireworks enjoyed by simple and unlettered people predisposed to accept any flash of lightning as the Lord's own signal. The 70,000 witnesses included believers and non-believers, pious old ladies and scoffing young men. Hundreds, from these mixed categories, have given formal testimony. Reports do vary; impressions are in minor details confused, but none to our knowledge has directly denied the visible prodigy of the sun's unscheduled behavior in the sky. The special reporter for the Lisbon daily, *O Dia*, had this to report in the edition of October 17, 1917:

At one o'clock in the afternoon, midday by the sun, the rain stopped. The sky, pearly grey in color, illuminated the vast arid landscape with a strange light. The sun had a transparent gauzy veil so that the eyes could easily be fixed upon it. The grey mother-of-pearl tone turned into a sheet of silver which broke up as the clouds were torn apart and the silver sun, enveloped in the same gauzy grey light, was seen to whirl and turn in the circle of broken clouds. A cry went up from every mouth and people fell on their knees on the muddy ground....

The light turned a beautiful blue, as if it had come through the stained-glass windows of a cathedral, and spread itself over the people who knelt with outstretched hands. The blue faded slowly, and then the light seemed to pass through yellow glass. Yellow stains fell against white handkerchiefs, against the dark skirts of the women. They were repeated on the trees, on the stones and on the serra. People wept and prayed with uncovered heads, in the presence of a miracle they had awaited. The seconds seemed like hours, so vivid were they.

In the journal, *O Seculo*, which we have previously described as Portugal's most influential newspaper—pro-government in policy, and avowedly anticlerical, the following extract was published under the by-line of Avelino de Almeida:

From the road, where the vehicles were parked and where hundreds of people who had not dared to brave the mud were congregated, one could see the immense multitude turn toward the sun, which appeared free from clouds and in its zenith. It looked like a plaque of dull silver, and it was possible to look at it without the least discomfort. It might have been an eclipse which was taking place. But at that moment a great shout went up, and one could hear the spectators nearest at hand shouting: "A miracle! A miracle!"

Before the astonished eyes of the crowd, whose aspect was biblical as they stood bareheaded, eagerly searching the sky, the sun trembled, made sudden incredible movements outside all cosmic laws—the sun "danced" according to the typical expression of the people.

Standing at the step of an omnibus was an old man. With his face turned to the sun, he recited the Credo in a loud voice. I asked who he was and was told Senhor Joao da Cunha Vasconcelos. I saw him afterwards going up to those around him who still had their hats on, and vehemently imploring them to uncover before such an extraordinary demonstration of the existence of God.

Identical scenes were repeated elsewhere, and in one place a woman cried out: "How terrible! There are even men who do not uncover before such a stupendous miracle!"

People then began to ask each other what they had seen. The great majority admitted to having seen the trembling and the dancing of the sun; others affirmed that they saw the face of the Blessed Virgin; others, again, swore that the sun whirled on itself like a giant Catherine wheel and that it lowered itself to the earth as if to burn it in its rays. Some said they saw it change colors successively....

Another, and entirely responsible witness of the great event in the Cova da Iria, was Dr. Almeida Garrett, of Coimbra University, who in response to a request by Dr. Formigao, recorded the following:

I was looking at the place of the apparitions, in a serene, if cold, expectation of something happening, and with diminishing curiosity, because a long time had passed without anything to excite my attention. Then I heard a shout from thousands of voices and saw the multitude suddenly turn its back and shoulders away from the point toward which up to now it had directed its attention, and turn to look at the sky on the opposite side.

It must have been nearly two o'clock by the legal time, and about midday by the sun. The sun, a few moments before, had broken through the thick layer of clouds which hid it, and shone clearly and intensely. I veered to the magnet which seemed to be drawing all eyes, and saw it as a disc with a clean-cut rim, luminous and shining, but which did not hurt the eyes. I do not agree with the comparison which I have heard made in Fatima—that of a dull silver disc. It was a clearer, richer, brighter color, having something of the luster of a pearl. It did not in the least resemble the moon on a clear night because one saw it and felt it to be a living body. It was not spheric like the moon, nor did it have the same color, tone, or shading. It looked like a glazed wheel made of mother-of-pearl. It could not be confused, either, with the sun seen through fog (for there was no fog at the time), because it was not opaque, diffused or veiled. In Fatima it gave

light and heat and appeared clear-cut with a well-defined rim.

The sky was mottled with light cirrus clouds with the blue coming through here and there, but sometimes the sun stood out in patches of clear sky. The clouds passed from west to east and did not obscure the light of the sun, giving the impression of passing behind it, though sometimes these flecks of white took on tones of pink or diaphanous blue as they passed before the sun.

It was a remarkable fact that one could fix one's eyes on this brazier of heat and light without any pain in the eyes or blinding of the retina. The phenomenon, except for two interruptions when the sun seemed to send out rays of resplendent heat which obliged us to look away, must have lasted about ten minutes.

The sun's disc did not remain immobile. This was not the sparkling of a Heavenly body, for it spun round on itself in a mad whirl. Then, suddenly, one heard a clamor, a cry of anguish breaking from all the people. The sun, whirling wildly, seemed to loosen itself from the firmament and advance threateningly upon the earth as if to crush us with its huge and fiery weight. The sensation during those moments was terrible.

During the solar phenomenon, which I have just described in detail, there were changes of color in the atmosphere. Looking at the sun, I noticed that everything around was becoming darkened. I looked first at the nearest objects and then extended my glance further afield as far as the horizon. I saw everything an amethyst color. Objects around me, the sky and the atmosphere, were of the same color. An oak tree nearby threw a shadow of this color on the ground.

Fearing that I was suffering from an affection of the retina, an improbable explanation because in that case one could not see things purple-colored, I turned away and shut my eyes, keeping my hands before them to intercept the light. With my back still turned, I opened my eyes and saw that the landscape was the same purple color as before.

The impression was not that of an eclipse, and while looking at the sun I noticed that the atmosphere had cleared. Soon after I heard a peasant who was near me shout out in tones of astonishment: "Look, that lady is all yellow!"

And in fact everything, both near and far, had changed, taking on the color of old yellow damask. People looked as if they were suffering from jaundice, and I recall a sensation of amusement at seeing them look so ugly and unattractive. My own hand was the same color. All the phenomena which I have described were observed by me in a calm and serene state of mind, and without any emotional disturbance. It is for others to interpret and explain them.

You may be assured the quotations here supplied from the testimony of actual witnesses represent the general impression of the countless number of

people we have interviewed. Looking back, there does seem to be an oversupply of doctors. It should be made clear that Dr. Garrett is not a physician, but a university professor. Dr. Formigao, as earlier explained, is a priest, and his doctorate was gained in philosophy, at Rome. Both are teamed, responsible men. But in consideration of whether or not the great commotion at Fatima that day represented the work of Heaven, or a general optical illusion, it is comforting to call as a witness Dr. Domingos Pinto Coelho, who happened to be, of all convenient things, an eminent eye specialist. The following is from his report in the newspaper *Ordem*:

The sun, at one moment surrounded with scarlet flame, at another aureoled in yellow and deep purple, seemed to be in an exceedingly fast and whirling movement, at times appearing to be loosened from the sky and to be approaching the earth, strongly radiating heat.

On the evening of that same October 13, Father Manuel Pereira da Silva wrote to his friend and colleague, Canon Pereira de Almeida (don't let the confusion of baptismal and surnames defeat you), the following description:

The sun appeared with its circumference well defined. It came down as if to the height of the clouds and began to whirl giddily upon itself like a captive ball of fire. With some interruptions, this lasted about eight minutes. The atmosphere darkened and the features of each became yellow. Everyone knelt even in the mud....

The impressions of Father da Silva are especially interesting because he had been bitterly and outspokenly skeptical of the entire affair. Faith then hit him with such impact that he vowed, perhaps in reparation for his cynicism, never again to indulge his happy taste for wine. Whatever his motive, it was a promise the good father kept.

While writing this book we met Senhor Alfredo da Silva Santos, who was attending a retreat for professional men. Knowing that Senhor Santos had been present on the day of the solar prodigy, we asked what he was able to recall.

On the day before (he told us), I was in the Cafe Martinho, in Lisbon, when my cousin, John Lindim, from Torres Novas, entered and said to me:

"Everyone is going to Fatima tomorrow. There seems to be something extraordinary in the air, and we are all full of curiosity to know what it is all about."

"I will go with you," I told him.

We made our arrangements, and went in three motor cars on the early morning of the 13th. There was a thick mist, and the car which went in front mistook the way so that we were all lost for a time and only arrived at the Cova da Iria at midday by the sun. It was absolutely full of people, but for my part I

felt devoid of any religious feeling. When Lucia called out: "Look at the sun!" the whole multitude repeated: "Attention to the sun!" It was a day of incessant drizzle but a few moments before the miracle it stopped raining. I can hardly find words to describe what followed. The sun began to move, and at a certain moment appeared to be detached from the sky and about to hurtle upon us like a wheel of flame. My wife—we had been married only a short time—fainted, and I was too upset to attend to her, and my brother-in-law, Joao Vassalo, supported her on his arm. I fell on my knees, oblivious of everything, and when I got up I don't know what I said. I think I began to cry out like the others. An old man with a white beard began to attack the atheists aloud and challenged them to say whether or not something supernatural had occurred.

"Well," we asked him, "truthfully now—do you think it could have been a case of collective suggestion?"

He laughed and shook his head. "No," Senhor Santos said, "the only collective thing I can remember that day was the rain that soaked all of us through to our bones."

Actually, this hypothesis of mass hallucination suffers decisive defeat from an incontrovertible fact: the phenomenon was observed not only at Cova da Iria, but by people who were substantial distances away from there, and by no means in receptive spiritual moods. The Portuguese poet, Alfonso Lopes Vieira, observed the bright display from a distance of nearly 25 miles.

On that day of October 13, 1917 (Senhor Vieira recalls), without remembering the predictions of the children, I was enchanted by a remarkable spectacle in the sky of a kind I had never seen before. I saw it from this veranda....

An interesting document has been left by the late Father Inacio Lourenco, a priest from Alburitel, a village about eleven miles from Fatima. We have ourselves taken the trouble to verify his recollections with many of his surviving parishioners, and especially with the school teacher, Dona Delfina Lopes, to whom he refers. Here is Father Lourenco's report:

I was only nine years old at this time, and I went to the local village school. At about midday we were surprised by the shouts and cries of some men and women who were passing in the street in front of the school. The teacher, a good, pious woman, though nervous and impressionable, was the first to run into the road, with the children after her.

Outside, the people were shouting and weeping and pointing to the sun, ignoring the agitated questions of the schoolmistress. It was the great Miracle, which one could see quite distinctly from the top of the hill where my village was situated—the Miracle of the sun, accompanied by all its extraordinary

phenomena.

I feel incapable of describing what I saw and felt. I looked fixedly at the sun, which seemed pale and did not hurt the eyes. Looking like a ball of snow revolving on itself, it suddenly seemed to come down in a zigzag, menacing the earth. Terrified, I ran and hid myself among the people, who were weeping and expecting the end of the world at any moment.

Near us was an unbeliever who had spent the morning mocking at the simpletons who had gone off to Fatima just to see an ordinary girl. He now seemed to be paralyzed, his eyes fixed on the sun. Afterwards he trembled from head to foot and lifting up his arms fell on his knees in the mud, crying out to Our Lady.

Meanwhile the people continued to cry out and to weep, asking God to pardon their sins. We all ran to the two chapels in the village, which were soon filled to overflowing. During those long moments of the solar prodigy, objects around us turned all the colors of the rainbow. We saw ourselves blue, yellow, red, etc. All these strange phenomena increased the fears of the people. After about ten minutes the sun, now dull and pallid, returned to its place. When the people realized that the danger was over, there was an explosion of joy, and everyone joined in thanksgiving and praise to Our Lady.

The evidence mounts that for the devout, the pagan, and the coolly in-between, it must have been an exciting afternoon. Decide as you will whether the power of God or the faulty eyesight of 70,000 is responsible for this chapter of contemporary history. Believe only that we, who are reporting it here, lived for more than seven years within sight of the Cova da Iria, and have yet found no one to confound or deny with just reason, the events of this memorable day.

Perhaps less dramatic than the visible acrobatics of a heavenly body ninety million miles removed from earth, was another phenomenon we have not yet emphasized. In that hectic noontime, while the great star hung in cloudless clarity, the people, who had been drenched and soggy with the pelting, unremitting rain, were suddenly and completely dry—their shoes and stockings, their skin and their clothes.

We'll quote from a pastoral letter on the apparitions written in 1922 by D. Jose Alves Correia da Silva, the bishop of Leiria:

The solar phenomenon of October 13, described in newspapers of the time, was of a most marvelous nature and caused the deepest impression on those who had the good fortune to witness it.

The children had foretold the day and the hour at which it would occur. The news spread rapidly throughout Portugal, and in spite of bad weather, thousands and thousands of people congregated at the spot. At the hour of the last

apparition they witnessed all the manifestations of the sun which paid homage to the Queen of Heaven and earth, more brilliant than the heavenly body itself at its zenith of light.

This phenomenon, which was not registered in any astronomical observatory, and could not, therefore, have been of natural origin, was witnessed by people of every category and class, by believers as well as unbelievers, journalists of the principal daily papers and even by people miles away, a fact which destroys any theory of collective hallucination.[\[25\]](#) At seven o'clock, on the evening of October 13, Dr. Formigao continued his methodical questioning of the children. He had no desire to punish them in their weariness, because if the day had substantiated their claims and exalted them in joy, it had also wilted them with its many emotional trials. Zealous strangers and frantic friends had been at them since the hour of rising. They were sleepy and tired, bewildered and strained, and it seemed to the wise priest almost as cruel to press them further, as it was essential to question them now while their impressions were still fresh. They must have no time alone for private counsel and possible conspiracy. He believed them all right; wholeheartedly he had rejoiced at the manifestations of the day. And yet, as a conscientious sleuth—or devil's advocate—he could not permit his own affection to hinder his objectivity. He was able to interview each of them, alone, and with calm deliberation. The first witness was Lucia.

"Did Our Lady appear again today in the Cova da Iria?"

"Yes"

"Was she dressed as on the other occasions?"

"She was dressed in the same way."

"Did St. Joseph and the Holy Child appear?"

"Yes."

"Did anyone else appear?"

"Our Lord appeared and blessed the people and Our Lady of the two cards."

"What do you mean by Our Lady of the two cards?"

"Our Lady appeared dressed like Our Lady of Dolors but without the sword in her heart, and Our Lady dressed—I don't quite know how, but I think it was Our Lady of Mount Carmel."

"They all came at the same time, did they not?"

With my presentiment of the truth of the apparitions, I confess that it was with trepidation that I asked this question, purposely giving it an affirmative form (Dr. Formigao told us). Although it would not have been, strictly speaking, impossible for the children to have had a simultaneous vision of the three Images of the Blessed Virgin, it would clearly have created a serious difficulty.

"No. First I saw Our Lady of the Rosary, then St. Joseph and the Holy Child.

After that I saw Our Lord, then Our Lady of Dolors and at the end what I think was Our Lady of Mount Carmel."

"Was the Holy Child standing or being carried by St. Joseph?"

"He was being carried by St. Joseph."

"Was He already a big child?"

"No. He was little."

"How old would He have been?"

"About a year."

"Why did you say that the Lady at one moment seemed to be dressed like Our Lady of Mount Carmel?"

"Because she had two things hanging from her hand."

"Did they appear on the oak tree?"

"No, they appeared near the sun, after the Lady had disappeared from the oak tree."

"Was Our Lord standing?"

"I only saw Him from the waist."

"How long did the apparition on the oak tree last? Long enough to say the Rosary?"

"I don't think it was as long as that."

"Did the figures you saw in the sun last long?"

"No, only a short time."

"Did the Lady say who she was?"

"She said that she was the Lady of the Rosary."

"Did you ask what she wanted?"

"Yes."

"What did she say?"

"She said that we were to amend our lives and not offend Our Lord anymore because He was too much offended already, and that we were to say the Rosary and ask pardon for our sins."

"Did she say anything else?"

"She said that a chapel was to be built in the Cova da Iria."

"Where was the money to come from?"

"I think it would be what was left there."

"Did she say anything about our soldiers who were killed in the war?"

"No, she said nothing about them."

"Did she tell you to tell the people to look at the sun?"

"No."

"Did she say that the people were to do penance?"

"Yes."

"Did she use the word penance?"

"No. She said we were to say the Rosary and amend our lives and ask pardon of Our Lord, but she did not use the word penance."

"When did the sign in the sun begin? Was it after the Lady disappeared?"

"Yes."

"Did you see the Lady come?"

"Yes."

"Where did she come from?"

"From the east."

"And the other times?"

"I didn't look the other times."

"Did you see her go?"

"Yes."

"In which direction?"

"To the east."

"How did she disappear?"

"Little by little."

"What disappeared first?"

"Her head. Then her body, and the last thing I saw was her feet."

"When she went did she go with her back toward or away from the people?"

"With her back toward the people."

"Did she take long to go?"

"Only a short time."

"Was she surrounded by any light?"

"I saw her in the middle of brilliant light. This time, too, she was blinding.

Sometimes I had to rub my eyes."

"Will Our Lady appear again?"

"I don't think so; she said nothing about it."

"Will you return to the Cova da Iria on the 13th?"

"No."

"Will Our Lady do any miracles? Cure any sick people?"

"I don't know."

"Didn't you ask her anything?"

"I told her today that I had various petitions to give and she said she would grant some and not others."

"Did she say when she would grant them?"

"No."

"Under what title is the chapel of the Cova da Iria to be?"

"She said today that she was the Lady of the Rosary."

"Did she say that many people were to go there from all parts?"  
"She didn't say that anybody was to go."  
"Did you see the signs in the sun?"  
"I saw it going round."  
"Did you see signs on the oak tree?"  
"No."  
"When was the Lady the most beautiful, this time or on other occasions?"  
"She was the same."  
"How long was her dress?"  
"It fell below the middle of her legs."  
"What color was Our Lady's dress when she was near the sun?"  
"The mantle was blue and the dress white."  
"And Our Lord and St. Joseph and the Holy Child?"  
"St. Joseph's was red and I think Our Lord and the Child wore red too."  
"When did you ask Our Lady to make the people believe in her apparitions?"  
"I asked her several times. I think the first time I asked was in June."  
"When did she tell you the secret?"  
"I think it was the second time."

After the careful questioning of Lucia, Dr. Formigao turned his attention to Jacinta in a separate interview.

"Apart from Our Lady," he asked her, "whom did you see today when you were in the Cova da Iria?"

"I saw St. Joseph and the Holy Child."  
"Where did you see them?"  
"I saw them near the sun."  
"What did the Lady say?"  
"She said that we were to say the Rosary every day and that the war would end today."  
"To whom did she say this?"  
"To Lucia and to me. Francisco didn't hear."  
"Did you hear her say when our soldiers would come back?"  
"No."  
"What else did she say?"  
"She said that a chapel was to be built in the Cova da Iria."  
"Where did the Lady come from?"  
"From the east."  
"And where did she go when she disappeared?"  
"She went to the east."  
"Did she go away backward facing the people?"

"No, she turned her back to the people."

"Did she say that she would come back to the Cova da Iria?"

"She said before that it was the last time she would come, and today, too, she said it was the last time."

"Did the Lady say anything else?"

"She said today that we were to say the Rosary every day to Our Lady of the Rosary."

"Where did she say that people were to say the Rosary?"

"She did not say where."

"Did she say that they were to go to the church?"

"She never said that."

"Where do you like to say the Rosary best; here, at home, or in the Cova da Iria,"

"In the Cova da Iria."

"Why do you like to say it there?"

"I don't know."

"With what money did the Lady say the chapel was to be built?"

"She said a chapel was to be built, but I don't know about the money."

"Did you look at the sun?"

"Yes."

"Did you see the signs?"

"Yes."

"Did the Lady tell you to look at the sun?"

"No."

"Then how did you see the signs?"

"I turned my eyes to the side."

"Was the Holy Child on the right or the left of St. Joseph?"

"On the right."

"Was he standing or being carried?"

"He was standing."

"Did you see St. Joseph's right arm?"

"No."

"How tall was the Child? Did His head come up to St. Joseph's chest?"

"He didn't reach St. Joseph's waist."

"How old do you think the Child was?"

"The age of Deolinda Neves." (A child of about two years.)

The weary but patient Francisco was the last to be interviewed. "Did you see Our Lady this time?" Dr. Formigao asked.

"Yes."

"What Lady was she?"  
"She was the Lady of the Rosary."  
"How was she dressed?"  
"She was dressed in white with a rosary in her hand."  
"Did you see St. Joseph and the Holy Child?"  
"Yes."  
"Where did you see them?"  
"By the sun."  
"Was the Child being carried by St. Joseph or was He standing? Was He big or little?"  
"He was little."  
"Was He the size of Deolinda Neves?"  
"Yes, He was just her size."  
"Did the Lady hold her hands?"  
"She had them joined."  
"Did you only see her on the oak tree or by the sun as well?"  
"I saw her near the sun too."  
"Which was the brighter, the sun or the face of the Lady?"  
"The Lady's face was brighter; she was white."  
"Did you hear what the Lady said?"  
"I heard nothing that she said."  
"Who told you the secret; was it the Lady?"  
"No, it was Lucia."  
"Will you tell it?"  
"No."  
"You are afraid of being beaten by Lucia if you tell it, aren't you?"  
"No."  
"Then why don't you tell it? Is it a sin?"  
"Perhaps it is a sin to tell the secret."  
"Is the secret for the good of your soul, and Jacinta's and Lucia's soul?"  
"Yes."  
"Is it for the good of Father Ferreira's soul?"  
"I don't know."  
"Would the people be sad if they knew?"  
"Yes."  
"From which side did the Lady come?"  
"From the east."  
"And did she disappear in the same direction?"  
"Yes, she went to the east."

"Did she go backward?"  
"She turned her back to us."  
"Did she go slowly or quickly?"  
"Slowly."  
"Did she walk as we do?"  
"She didn't walk. She just went without moving her feet."  
"What part of the Lady disappeared first?"  
"The head."  
"Did you see her easily this time?"  
"I saw her better than last month."  
"When was she most beautiful, now or the other times?"  
"As beautiful now as last month."

Doctor Formigao returned to his seminary at Santarem. His journey had been fruitful and his faith was high. He had himself observed phenomena as clearly miraculous, to his sober judgment. For the weary and charming little girls and boy, who had championed their Lady with brave love through their months of trial, he felt nothing but fatherly affection. There was only one unhappy collision between their testimony and apparent truth: both Lucia and Jacinta had quoted the Blessed Virgin as having said, on October 13, "The war will end today."

The war had not ended that day, and the Mother of all truth, as any Catholic theologian must believe the Virgin to be, is not capable of falsehood. Obviously then either the children had offended truth or were innocently mistaken in this very crucial item of their testimony. As a responsible priest, Dr. Formigao was unable to shrug the discrepancy away. It gave him no rest, and consequently, six days later, on the 19th of the month, he returned to Aljustrel. He arrived in the afternoon and paused for a while on that part of the road that faced the site of the apparitions.

In the Cova da Iria (runs Dr. Formigao's narrative) there were a few pious women saying the Rosary near the oak tree. The latter, reduced to a mere trunk a few inches high, was surrounded with branches of wild plants and flowers. The devotion of the pilgrims who wished to have a souvenir of the Virgin's pedestal had almost entirely annihilated it though everything else was in the same state as on the eve of the last apparition. I then went to the house of the Marto family where I found the three seers undergoing an interrogation from the Reverend Lacerda, parish priest of Milagres, director of the weekly paper, The Leiria Messenger, and also chaplain to the Portuguese Expeditionary Force. Home on leave for a short time, he wished to see the children of Aljustrel before going back to France. He was accompanied by another priest from Leiria and the parish priest of Fatima.

Actually, viewing the general scene in the Marto household, Dr. Formigao suffered a shock. His little friends had reached an advanced state of physical and mental exhaustion. Badgered and haunted for days by droves of thoughtlessly curious people, they were no longer equal to the serious accommodation of pertinent questions.

Lucia was especially exhausted by her ordeal (Dr. Formigao had written). She was completely worn out. Her fatigue was such that she could not respond with care and attention to the detail required. Her answers were almost mechanical at times, and she was frequently unable to recall incidents of the apparitions, which had certainly never been the case before. I felt that if the children were not spared the pain and fatigue of these endless inquiries, that their health would be seriously undermined.[\[26\]](#) Any prudent review of the situation suggests the children should have been taken away from Aljustrel, at least temporarily, and allowed the sanctuary of anonymity in some section of the country where they were not known. Dr. Formigao, seeking to be merciful, still felt himself in duty obliged to question them once more. He began with Lucia: "On the 13th of this month Our Lady said that the war would finish on that same day? What were the words she used?

"She said: 'The war will end today. You can expect the soldiers very shortly.'  
"

"But listen, Lucia, the war is still going on. The papers give news of battles after the 13th. How can you explain that if Our Lady said the war would end that day?"

"I don't know; I only know that I heard her say that the war would end on that day."

"Some people declare that they heard you say that Our Lady had said that the war would end shortly. Is that true?"

"I said exactly what Our Lady had said."

"On the 27th of last month I came to your house to speak with you. Do you remember?"

"I remember seeing you here."

"Well, on that day you told me that Our Lady had said that on the 13th of October she would come with St. Joseph and the Holy Child and that afterwards the war would end, not necessarily on the 13th."

"I can't remember now exactly how she put it. She might have said that, or perhaps I did not understand her properly."

"On the 13th did you tell the people to look at the sun?"

"I don't remember doing that."

"Did you tell them to shut their umbrellas?"

"In the other months I did; I don't remember about this last time."

"Did you know when the sign in the sun was going to begin?"

"No."

"Did you look at it?"

"Yes, it looked like the moon."

"Why did you look at the sun?"

"I looked because the people said so."

"Did Our Lady say that she would pray to her Divine Son on behalf of the soldiers who had been killed in the war?"

"No, Father."

"Did she say that the people would be punished if they did not amend their lives?"

"I can't remember if she said that; I don't think so."

"On the 13th you did not have any doubts about what the Lady had said.

Why have you these doubts now?"

"I remembered better on that day, it was nearer the time."

"What was it that you saw about a year ago? Your mother said that you and some other children had seen a form wrapped up and hidden in a cloth. Why did you tell me last month that it was nothing?"

Lucia could not reply clearly to this.

"Did you run away that time?"

"I think I did."

"On the 11th of this month you did not want to tell me that Our Lord would appear and give His blessing to the people. Was it because you thought I would laugh at you like other people had done, and say it was impossible? Or was it because there were many other people there at the time and you did not want to say it in front of them? Do you know that Jacinta has told me everything?"

To this there was no coherent reply.

"When did Our Lady tell you that there would be these apparitions on the 13th of October?"

"It was the day that she appeared at Valinhos, or on another 13th. I can't remember well."

"Did you see Our Lord?"

"I saw the figure of a man; I think it was Our Lord."

"Where was this figure?"

"It was near the sun."

"Did you see it bless the people?"

"I didn't see it, but Our Lady said that Our Lord would come to give His blessing to the people."

"If the people knew the secret that Our Lady told you, would they be sad?"

"I think they would be about the same."

Francisco was the next to be questioned.

"Did you see Our Lord bless the people on the 13th of this month?" Dr. Formigao asked.

"No, I saw Our Lady."

"Did you see Our Lady of Dolors and Our Lady of Mount Carmel?"

"No. Our Lady was the one I saw down below (on the tree). She was dressed the same."

"Did you look at the sun?"

"Yes."

"Did you see St. Joseph and the Child Jesus?"

"Yes."

"Were they near to or far from the sun?"

"They were near."

"Which side of the sun was St. Joseph?"

"On the left side."

"And on which side was Our Lady?"

"On the right side."

"Where was the Child Jesus?"

"He was near St. Joseph."

"On which side?"

"I didn't notice which side."

"Was the Child big or small?"

"Small."

"When Our Lady was over the oak tree did you hear what she said to Lucia?"

"No."

"Did you hear the sound of her voice?"

"No."

"Did it seem as if she were not speaking?"

"Yes."

"Did you see her lips move?"

"No."

"Did you see her laugh?"

"No."

"Did you see the signs in the sun? What were they?"

"I looked and saw the sun going round; it looked like a wheel of fire."

"When did the signs begin, before or after Our Lady disappeared from the oak tree?"

"When Our Lady disappeared."

"Did you hear Lucia tell the people to look at the sun?"

"I did. She gave a shout when she told the people to look at the sun."

"Was it the Lady who told her to tell the people to look at the sun?"

"Yes, the Lady pointed toward the sun."

"When did she do this?"

"When she disappeared."

"Did the signs begin at once?"

"Yes."

"What colors did you see in the sun?"

"I saw very pretty colors: blue, yellow and others."

Jacinta was questioned while she and Dr. Formigao were walking from Aljustrel to Fatima.

"On the 13th of this month did you see Our Lord near the sun and Our Lady of Dolors and Mount Carmel?"

"No."

"But on the 11th of this month you said they would appear?"

"Yes, I did. Lucia saw the other Lady; I didn't."

"Did you see St. Joseph?"

"Yes. Lucia said that St. Joseph gave a blessing."

"Did you look at the sun?"

"Yes."

"And what did you see?"

"I saw it red and green and other colors, and I saw it going around."

"Did you hear Lucia tell the people to look at the sun?"

"Yes. She told them in a very loud voice. The sun was already going round."

"Did the Lady tell her to tell the people?"

"The Lady said nothing about it."

"What did the Lady say this last time?"

"She said: 'I have come here to tell you that people must not offend our Lord anymore because He is very much offended and that if the people amend their lives the war will end, and if not the world will not end. Lucia heard better than I did what the Lady said."

"Did she say that the war would end on that day or shortly?"

"Our Lady said that the war would end when she arrived in Heaven."

"But the war has not ended."

"But it will end, it will."

"When will it end?"

"I think it will end on Sunday."

Dr. Formigao was having trouble. This question of the war's end was an unfortunate contradiction. The clash of fact and prophecy remained. The good priest, having himself been present at the miraculous manifestations above the Cova da Iria, was obliged to accept the children's story as generally true. As to the stubborn hurdle provided by this single contradiction, there was only one reasonable explanation: the children were mistaken. Certainly no one had declared them infallible, and in their present state of nervous exhaustion it appeared to Dr. Formigao that they should not be expected to marshal their talents and recollections like adults on trial for their lives.

Seven years later, during the official inquiry conducted in July of 1924, in the peaceful surroundings of the convent at Vilar, Lucia attempted to look back at this obstinate contradiction:

I think Our Lady said this: "People must be converted. The war will end today and the soldiers can be expected soon."

But afterwards, at home, Jacinta said that Our Lady had put it this way. "People must be converted. The war will end within a year." I was myself so preoccupied with all the petitions that people had asked me to place before Our Lady that I could not give all my attention to her words.

It should be noted that neither at the age of ten nor at seventeen did Lucia respond in the manner calculated to be "popular"; the evidence accrues that she was being truthful to the best of her ability and, almost certainly, mistaken. Our own persuasion is that the declaration closest to the truth was made by Jacinta on that thirteenth of October while she was walking with Dr. Formigao along the road from Aljustrel to Fatima. When asked what Our Lady had said on this last occasion, she replied, "I have come here to say that men must not offend Our Lord anymore because He is already very much offended, and that if they amend their lives the war will end."

This agrees with the thoughtful conclusions of Dr. Fischer, the famous German priest and authority on Fatima, who has given close and conscientious study to all the available facts and testimony.

Dr. Formigao made one more trip to Aljustrel for the purpose of questioning the children. This occurred on November 2, of the same year, and we present the record of these final conversations not because we think them to be of capital importance, but rather because it reveals once more the simplicity and earnest candor of the three little seers. The quality of obliging frankness was so marked in them that it remains the sturdiest stone on which the story of Fatima rests. He questioned Jacinta first.

"On which side of the sun," he asked her, "did the Child Jesus stand when you saw Him on the 13th of October?"

"He stood in the middle, at the right side of St. Joseph; Our Lady was on the right side of the sun."

"Was the Lady you saw near the sun different from the one you saw on the oak tree?"

"The Lady I saw near the sun had a white dress and a blue mantle. The one I saw on the oak tree had a white dress and mantle."

"What color were the feet of the Lady who appeared on the oak tree?"

"They were white; I think she wore stockings."

"What color were St. Joseph's dress and the Child's."

"St. Joseph's was red and I think the Child's was red, too."

"When did the Lady reveal the secret?"

"I think it was in July."

"What did the Lady say the first time she appeared in May?"

"Lucia asked what she wanted and she said we were to go there every month until the last month, when she would say what she wanted."

"Did Lucia ask anything else?"

"She asked if she would go to Heaven and the Lady said yes. Then she asked if I would go to Heaven too and Our Lady said yes again. Lucia asked then if Francisco would go, and the answer was yes, except that he would have to say many Rosaries."

"Did the Lady say anything else?"

"I don't remember anything else."

"What did the Lady say the second time, in June?"

"Lucia said: 'What do you want?' and the Lady replied: 'I want you to learn to read.'"

"Did Lucia ask anything else?"

"She asked about the sick people and sinners. The Lady said that she would make some better and convert them, but not others."

"Did the Lady say anything else?"

"On that day she didn't say anything else."

"What did the Lady say in August?"

"In August we didn't go to the Cova da Iria. You mean what did the Lady say at Valinhos? Lucia asked her if she was to bring Manuel and the Lady said she could bring everybody."

"What else?"

"She said we were to make two litters and to take them to the feast of the Rosary, I and Lucia with two girls dressed in white; and that Francisco and three other boys were to carry the other."

"Anything else?"

"I can't remember."

"What did the Lady say in October?"

"Lucia said: 'What do you want?' and she replied: 'Do not offend our Lord anymore because He is very much offended.' She said that He would pardon our sins if we wanted to go to Heaven. She said also that we must say the Rosary and that we could expect our soldiers back very soon and the war would end that day. She said that we were to build a chapel and I don't know if she said 'to the Lady of the Rosary' or just that she herself was the Lady of the Rosary."

Dr. Formigao then turned his attention to Lucia, in this way:

"Did the Lady wear stockings? Are you sure of this?"

"I think they were stockings, but they might not have been."

"You said once that the Lady wore white stockings. Were they stockings or were they feet?"

"If they were stockings, then they were white, but I am not sure if they were stockings or her feet."

"Was the dress always the same length?"

"The last time it seemed longer."

"You have never told the secret nor even said that the people would be sad if they knew. Francisco and Jacinta said they would be sad. If you cannot say this how can they say it?"

"I don't know if they ought to say that the people would be sad. Our Lady said that we were not to tell anybody anything, so I cannot say anything."

And, finally, to Francisco:

"On which side did the Child Jesus stand when you saw Him near the sun?"

"He stood nearer the sun, on its left side, but on the right side of St. Joseph."

"Was the Lady you saw near the sun different from the one over the oak tree?"

"The Lady I saw near the sun looked the same as the one I saw below."

"Did you see Our Lord bless the people?"

"I didn't see Our Lord."

## CHAPTER 11

### The Cost Of Heaven

It may well have been that the faithful, having observed at first hand the undeniable prodigies of October 13, felt some reason to believe that the enemies of religion in Portugal would, for at least a respectable little while, postpone their vicious and scandalous attacks against the Church. But it did not work out that happily.

The truth is that a kind of fury possessed the wilder of the anti-clericals. Through what magic or witchcraft the children's promises had been fulfilled, they did not know. Yet it seems certain that if the world had split in half like an apple to splatter seeds on other planets, they would still not have been convinced. Their only reaction was to retaliate with new excesses of disrespect.

In the general area around Fatima, the focal point of undisciplined prejudice could be found at the Masonic Lodge at Santarem, a town not far away. Here the bigots, at the cost of some pain and planning, made plans for a mock-religious procession which would satirize and by some means, not exactly clear to themselves, expose the alleged wonders of Fatima as a fraudulent imposition on the gullibility of the people. Their plan, well conceived, was carried out with professional skill.

During the night of October 23, as duly recorded in the newspaper, Diario de Noticias, some gentlemen from Santarem (whose names, incidentally, are listed) joined with some other apostles of enlightenment from Vila Nova de Ourem, then continued on to the Cova da Iria. Here is part of the contemporary newspaper report:

With an axe they cut the tree[27] under which the three shepherd children stood during the famous phenomenon of the 13th of this month. They took away the tree, together with a table on which a modest altar had been arranged, and on which a religious image (of Our Lady) had been placed. They also took a wooden arch, two tin lanterns, and two crosses, one made of wood and the other of bamboo-cane wrapped in tissue paper.

These prize exhibits, including, as a footnote explains, a bogus version of the tree, were placed on exhibit in a house not far from the Seminary at Santarem,

and an entrance fee exacted from those who wished to enter and be entertained at the widely advertised religious farce. One disappointment to the sponsors was the fact that not everyone, even among the Church's active critics, agreed it was amusing. The profits from the exhibit were to be turned over to a local charity, but the beneficiaries said very politely, "Thank you; no." Later, in the evening, a blasphemous procession was held.

The parade was headed by two men thumping on drums (a newspaper account reveals), while just behind it came the famous tree on which the Lady is said to have appeared. Next came the wooden arch, with its lanterns alight, then the altar table and other objects which the faithful had placed upon it at the Cova da Iria. To the sound of blasphemous litanies, the procession passed through the principal streets of the city, returning to the Sa da Band Eira Square, at which point it broke up.

Further research discloses that many of the demonstrators, less than satisfied with the appeal to bigotry they had attained, reorganized on a street not far from Sa da Band Eira Square, and were about to start parading anew when a woman, from a window above them, dropped a pail of water on their heads. She succeeded, less willingly, in drenching a local policeman as well, and the commotion in the street was considerable. A more substantial force of police then came along and dispersed the gathering.

The affair was a disgrace (the newspaper concludes). How is it possible that the authorities tolerate such a thing while at the same time refusing permission for the processions of the Church to which nearly the whole population belongs and whose ceremonies in no way offend the religious convictions of others?

The general reaction appears to have been one of revulsion, not only on the part of believing Catholics, but unanimously among all decent citizens. Literate and intelligent Catholics did not allow themselves to be intimidated by either hostile government policy or the unbridled bigotry and force of their Masonic antagonists. Protests came from all parts of the nation, and they are rather well typified by the following letter, written by Dr. Almeida Ribeiro, and dispatched to the government's Minister of Interior:

As believers, and sons of a nation which has been made great by the faith of its warriors and the heroism of its saints; as citizens of a city which has been in the forefront of civilization and culture, we strongly and earnestly protest against the scandalous processions tolerated by the public authorities, which, on the night of the 24th of this month passed through the streets of Santarem.

In this procession, which was worthy only of savages, the objects stolen from a place where people gather with the most pacific of intentions, were shamelessly exhibited. It took place in the presence of the whole population

which, however, was disgusted at this degrading action on the part of a few people who can only be called pustules of society. The cross of our Redeemer... and the image of the Virgin who has presided over our destinies in all periods of our history, were held up to sacrilege and profanation.

The Litany of Our Lady, whose name is the strength and comfort of our soldiers on the field of battle, was drunkenly intoned by the organizers of this satanic orgy.

There has not been in living memory such a repugnant attack on the faith of our people, directed against the traditions and dignity of a nation which prides itself on its respect for the beliefs of others.

It is impossible for us not to raise our voices against such flagrant provocation, and to repudiate this horrible parody with the greatest energy. Impossible not to make public our bitterness of heart in face of such an attack on the Faith of our fathers and our own; an attack also on the honor of this city on the part of a few miserable youths.

If we did not publish our disclaimer, we should be considered at home and abroad as the most cowardly and unworthy of Portuguese.

We, therefore, proclaim blessed the Cross of Christ which in other days rode the seas with our caravels when they went forth to conquer new worlds for the Faith and for civilization.

We also proclaim blessed the great Protectress of Portugal who, through the troubles and trials of our history has watched with maternal solicitude over our destiny, May God, forgive these impious men, destitute of all decent feeling, who blaspheme her adorable name, and may He withhold the punishment which would justly fall on a nation which consented to such crimes. Santarem, October 28, 1917.

Signed: "A Group of Catholics."

Actually, of course, in their almost satanic desire to discredit Fatima as a shrine of hope and reparation, these fist-shaking and Heaven-defying bigots did much to increase the local deposit of faith, to fortify the belief of the people in the miracle of the Cova da Iria, and to nourish that final and wonderful rebirth of religion in the Terra de Santa Maria.

But we have not yet run out of villains. A resourceful enemy of the Church, and a man devoted to heaving bricks at angels, real or imagined, was Senhor Jose Vale, editor of the Portuguese newspaper, O Mundo. A dedicated atheist and political anarchist, Senhor Vale was also an able and energetic pamphleteer, who set about flooding such places as Torres Novas, Vila Nova de Ourem and other neighboring districts with some flaming samples of his talent. This gentleman's freely distributed epistles shrieked with invectives, not only against the supposed

apparitions, but with special venom against the Church in general, and those "sly agents of Vatican wickedness," the Jesuits, in particular. Finally, at the Senhor's instigation, all liberal-minded opponents of clerical hocus-pocus were invited on the following Sunday to assemble outside the Fatima church, there and then to unmask this pious comedy of the children and their fantastic Lady-in-the-Sky.

Senhor Vale, for this adventure in public enlightenment, had gathered many mischievous recruits, and it was a situation very alarming to Father Ferreira, the parish priest at Fatima. Prudently, the worried priest arranged for Mass to be said that Sunday in the Chapel of Our Lady of Ortigo, rather than at Fatima. Fearing as well that Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta might be molested by an unruly mob, he decided that they ought not to remain at Aljustrel in this critical time. Divine Providence came to his assistance then, since it happened that a young noble known as Dom Pedro Caupers was staying at an ancient farm-estate, about four miles away. It was here the children were warmly received, along with certain members of their families.

Naturally then, with no one present in Fatima for himself or his followers to ridicule, the plans of Editor Jose Vale did not go as he had intended. The truth is that he did arrive at the parish church on the appointed hour, accompanied by Senhor Arthur Santos, the mayor, some strong-arm guards and a variety of friends, but the only one his marching and hooting delegates were able to find there was Senhor Francisco da Silver, the parish official. The scuttling of Editor Vale's clever intentions could not have been more humiliating. But by no means a timid or thin-skinned man, the Senhor rallied his frustrated band for a march on the Cova da Iria, his aim being to stage a mock pilgrimage, and here, at least, he found no lack of audience.

One enterprising man from Lomba da Egua, a believer in the apparitions, and a great disbeliever in Senhor Vale, had prepared an unusual reception. Assembling a variety of donkeys, he had tied each one of them to a tree, and being a student of both donkeys and men, he had managed to place under the nose of each jackass a modest quantity of a certain liquid that caused them to bray with loud and comic effect just when the "pilgrimage" arrived.

We did our best to annoy them (Maria da Capelinha has testified), and they knew it very well. When I arrived with two of my neighbors at 11:30 that morning, we hid near the place where the Chapel of Penance was later to be built. Three men, who were our friends, had climbed an oak tree to watch the demonstrators. One of the demonstrators then began to preach against religion, and every time he said something especially offensive, we would answer, "Blessed be Jesus and Mary!" A boy, perched in another tree, began to say the same thing in response to their insults, and they became so furious at us that they

sent two of their guards down after us, but we ran away through the trees and they could not find us.

Then after a while the men and the boys who had been to Mass at the Ortigo chapel came by, and seeing what was happening in the Cova da Iria, they began to shout all kinds of things at the speakers and the guards. "Country bumpkins! Fools!" the demonstrators shouted back. They sent their guards after our people again, but not one did they catch. We just kept running away and jeering and laughing at them as hard as we could. After a while they went off in the direction of Fatima, and we never saw or heard anything of them again.

The author, although having lived at Fatima for a considerable number of years, must rely on the records and on the gospel sincerity of his older friends and companions for a faithful picture of those early years with which we are here concerned.

Devotion did grow and multiply at the little shrine in the Cova da Iria. Senhora Maria da Capelinha was, of course, a primary witness, since her life, from the first apparition until the day of her recent death, was motivated almost exclusively by her love for Our Lady of Fatima.

After that day on which the sun danced (she has told us) there was an endless procession of people to the Cova, especially on Sundays and on the 13th day of each month. The people came from all around—all kinds of people, really. The men came with their sticks and bundles on their shoulders, and the women came carrying children. Even the old and infirm came faithfully, and all of them would kneel near the tree where Our Lady had appeared. A remarkable thing, but no one ever seemed weary or tired when he was here. It was, from the beginning, a place that gave strength. Here, at this holy place, mark you, nothing was ever sold, not a cup of wine or of water—nothing! And, oh, what good times those were for true prayer and true penance. Often we would weep with emotion.

Telling us of this place where her own heart and hopes had found an enduring home, Maria da Capelinha would sometimes have tears of great and remembered joy running down her cheeks.

Here there were many tears and prayers for Our Lady, and when there were plenty of people, we would sing our favorite hymns. All of us, it seems, did so much penance with such joy of heart, that I believe if I had died just then that Our Lady would have taken me straight to Heaven. Surely those days are long gone, but I cannot help myself from wishing to live them again.

People went home contented from the Cova because Our Lady always heard their prayers. Truly, recalling those times I can think of no one saying that Our Lady had not responded to prayer. All who came, it seems, came with faith, or else, if they did not have it at first, they found it here.

One day a man who had come a long way was standing there soaked with the rain. I went up to him and asked him if there were any ill effects. "No," he told me, "I am every bit all right and have never passed such a happy night as this. I have come and yet I do not feel at all tired. I am so happy in this place." I remember this because, apart from the rain, it was winter, and terribly cold, and this man had passed the whole night in the open air, since there was no shelter for him.

Another time a group of gentlemen and ladies came with Padre dos Reis do Montelo, who has since become a parish priest at St. Sebastian's in Lisbon. Later I found that they had been to a christening and a dinner nearby and had only come here through curiosity, since they did not believe one little bit in all they had heard. But they stayed awhile, listening to those of us who did believe, praying around the table where the lighted candles were. Suddenly Father Reis took off his hat and began responding to the Rosary we were saying. When it was finished, I heard same one say—and I think it was Father Reis: "Even if Rome never approves this, I shall always believe that something extraordinary happened here."

And yet Maria da Capelinha, for all this happiness, was not content. Of grave concern to her, as well as to Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco, was the fact that work had not yet been started on the chapel requested by Our Lady.

There had been no lack of alms. The faithful, although few of them had more than meager means, left food by the little tree, with the intention that it be sold to provide some of the necessary money for a chapel. Others left coins of varying value, and some left objects of gold and silver. Support for the simple project was full-hearted and most willing.

But there were other obstacles to fulfillment of the Lady's request. First of all there was the vigilant opposition of the civil authorities in the area, and beyond that, as a discouraging hindrance, there was the indifference and indeed the hostility toward their intentions of Father Ferreira, the parish priest.

As we know by now, Maria da Capelinha was custodian of the alms box, an honor by no means lined with joy. Faithfully every day Maria gathered the coins left on the table, and marketed, for the purpose of acquiring additional cash, the food that was left there, along with occasional items of greater value. In all, it became with time a considerable deposit of cash—the entire amount in the personal safekeeping of this pious woman, and, of course, there was yet no sign of a chapel. The tongues of the unsaintly began to wag up a substantial scandal. It was said without timidity, that the Carreiras, of Moita, had known how to use their opportunity.

My daughters (Maria de Capelinha recalls for us) went out to work by the

day in the fields, and those who worked with them used to taunt them if they had new dresses or shoes. The people began to murmur, and so I went to the priest and asked him to take charge of the money because I was tired of the criticism. Then Father Ferreira took me to his office and showed me a letter from the Cardinal Patriarch which said that the money was to be kept carefully by some reliable person (but not the children's parents) until further notice. This time I went home in a happier state of mind.

But the persecutions went on and this upset me a great deal. One day I heard a sermon by the parish priest of Santa Catherina on All Souls' Day. He said from the pulpit that people who looked after the money for festas were always criticized and that there were always evil tongues ready to wag. But we must suffer such persecutions patiently for Our Lord's sake as He had suffered for us. From that time I determined to bear my trouble.

It was not long, however, before another worry came up. A man from the mayor—the one we called the Tinker—came to the house with a notice for my husband to appear at the tribunal. We and the neighbors thought that it would be about the money:

"Be careful, Ti Manuel," they said to my husband. "Think out what you're going to say!"

"I needn't do that!" said he.

Although we didn't know for certain, we were nearly sure that it would be about the money, and when he arrived at the town hall the people in the office asked him:

"What do you want?"

"The mayor sent for me and I have come to find out what he wants."

"Where do you come from?"

"From Moita, near Fatima."

"Ah, yes," put in the mayor, who was sitting there, too.

"Then you are Senhor Carreira?" My husband replied that he was.

"Then you live near the Cova da Iria?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you go there often?"

"I have been there."

"What do you do there?"

"I do what the others do."

"Do you see Our Lady, too?"

"No, sir, I haven't seen her up to now."

"Then what do you do there?"

"I go with the other people."

"What do they say?"

"I don't know. Some say one thing, some another."

"There must be plenty of money left there?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Don't you see it, then? Don't you know anything about it?"

"I know nothing about it sir."

"Who keeps this money?"

"I don't know, sir."

"You seem to be a very ignorant man!"

"That I am, sir!"

Behind the mayor was Senhor Julio Lopes, from the tribunal, and he nodded to my husband approving the way he was talking and telling him to go on. My Manuel kept on pretending he knew nothing and returned home very pleased at having got the better of the mayor.

Some time passed, and when I saw that there was no more danger from the authorities in Ourem, I went to the priest and asked for his permission to begin building the chapel. I told him that we intended to put the statue of Our Lady in it, and the gifts which the people brought which were often spoiled by the rain as things were at present. Father Ferreira answered as if he didn't care one way or the other, and finally said that he didn't want to have anything to do with it.

"If we build it with the money we have, shall we be doing anything wrong?"

"I don't think so," he replied.

He spoke like this because he didn't want it to be said later that he had ordered the chapel to be built. He had orders from the Cardinal Patriarch not to take any part in the affair. For myself, I had heard enough and I went home happy. I told everything to my Manuel and he went and spoke to Lucia's father, because he was the owner of the land.

Lucia's father gave his permission and said we could make it any size we liked. All the same he was very upset. The people spoiled everything so that nothing would grow there. They spoiled the trees cutting branches—big branches, not twigs—right and left until there was nothing left growing near the tree of the apparitions. When he saw people going by with branches in their hands he knew that they had come from his property. When the little tree disappeared they began to attack the big ones and if my Manuel had not protected them with thorn bushes the big trees in the Cova would not be there now.

The chapel took more than a month to build and everyone wanted to have a finger in the pie. Some wanted it one way, some another. Each one had his own idea, the more so because no priest would have anything to do with it. It became

so difficult that I went and spoke to the mason, who was a man from Santa Catherina, a very good religious man and clever at his work.

"Don't worry about it, woman," he said to me. "If this is God's work there's bound to be trouble at the beginning."

It was a dear little chapel when it was finished but it was not much more than a depository because it had nothing inside. No priest would come and bless it, and it was only much later that this was done by Dr. Marques dos Santos. It had a little covered balcony in front, very tiny—with six people it was full. It was later enlarged to the size it is today.

It was a considerable time before the little chapel was graced with an image of the Heavenly Lady it was built to commemorate. Most of a year went by before it arrived at Fatima, concealed among farm tools in a crude wooden cart. As the price of caution, there was further delay before it was moved to the Cova da Iria, but in the interval it was blessed by the obliging but hardly enthusiastic Father Ferreira. Finally, on May 13, 1920, the statue was brought to the chapel, and the people came with joy to behold its rather great beauty. Among those who came was Lucia, now a girl of thirteen, who stood reverently above the opened packing case, and wept without shame or self-consciousness, and by now, of course, in 1920, her little cousins had gone to that reigning Queen of Heaven who had called them in fulfillment of her promise.

## CHAPTER 12

### The Three Children after the Apparitions

But what had happened to the children after the wonders of October, 1917? The story of Fatima moves along, and for Francisco and Jacinta, it is nearly done. If it is not evident now, it will be made abundantly clear that Jacinta, at the age of seven, was a kind of earthbound angel, whose virtues, even when told with deliberate restraint, will sound to many like pious exaggerations.

#### *Francisco*

Let's think then for a little while of Francisco, who at the time of the great October events, was nine. He was enrolled in the village school at Fatima and he was not a model pupil. Indeed, in the declared opinion of his male instructor, Francisco was something of a dolt, and whether through personal dullness or sheer disinterest, he made few academic strides. Our own belief is that he could have presented his instructor with a rather original excuse for his failings—a preoccupation with God.

Francisco was a truant. He went to school as seldom as possible, and in this, at least, he was a great success. But unlike most truants of the author's acquaintance and recollection, he did not practice the compensations of truancy: light larceny, sloth, or forbidden adventure. Francisco spent most of his time in church. Giving his heart to his Lady and her Son, he prayed virtually without rest, and if he was, in the favor of Heaven, the least of the children, he did not resent his humble place, for it was glory enough for Francisco to have been included at all. He was a brave little boy, and he was a fair-minded, good little boy, dragging his limping nature after him with heroic acts of will.

He was now, of course, with his little sister and their cousin, a valid celebrity to many. It was a distinction he shunned with proved consistence. He held only one abiding ambition which he disclosed one day to two visiting ladies who had posed that classic question so often presented by adults to little boys: What do you want to be when you grow up?

"Do you want to be a carpenter?" he was asked.

"No, madam."

"A soldier?"

"No, madam."

"Surely you would like to be a doctor?"

"No, not that, either."

"Then I know what you would like to be—a priest! Then you could say Mass all the time and you could preach."

"No, madam; I don't want to be a priest."

"Well, then, what do you want to be?"

"I don't want to be anything. I want to die and go to Heaven."

Ti Marto, who was present at this interview, has reported the incident to us. To this prudent, perceptive parent, the simple, automatic response of his son to this question of personal ambition was a crowning proof of his sincerity.

There is no evidence of childish self-dramatization in Francisco's daily devotion. His interior life was not only intense, it was very much his own. We get only glimpses, from the observations and chance discoveries of Lucia.

One day, Lucia recalls, when she was tending sheep with her cousins, she realized that Francisco had been missing for a considerable time. Fearing that for some reason he might be lost, she sent Jacinta in search of him, and though his sister wandered all over the pasture, calling his name in her thin, clear voice, there was no response. Lucia herself then, truly concerned, staged a systematic search. She found Francisco behind a stone wall, prostrate on the ground. When she touched his shoulder gently, and even when she shook him, he did not seem aware of her presence. Only when she shouted, "Francisco—what are you doing?" did he respond. He seemed to be dragging himself from the stupor of heavy sleep, or from a trance.

"Are you all right?" Lucia asked him.

"Yes," he said. "I began saying the prayer of the angel; then—well, I started thinking, that's all."

"You didn't hear Jacinta calling and calling you?"

"I never heard her," he said. "I never heard anything."

Lucia has made it clear that his desire for Heaven and his love of God and the Lady were the guiding motives of Francisco's few concluding years. His repeated acts of contemplative prayer were never staged for effect. They were for himself alone, and for the objects of his love. At odd times, Lucia recalls, he would disappear. On another occasion, at lunchtime, they missed him, and Lucia found him in secret prayer, behind a tall rock that had screened him from their view.

"Francisco," she said, "come and have your lunch"

"Please, let me be," he said. "You have yours with Jacinta, then call me when it is time for the Rosary."

"But what have you been doing?"

"I've been thinking of God," he said with almost tearful sincerity. "I've been thinking of Our Lord and of all the sins that have made Him unhappy. Oh, Lucia, if only I could comfort Him."

If this dialogue appears a bit unreal for a nine year old, there is nothing we can do to change it. This is the faithful record of Francisco Marto's years of grace.

Lucia's memoirs, sketching for us with such a certain, affectionate hand, the virtues of her cousins, are understandably bare of praise for herself. The truth is that they all advanced in virtue. Their heroic self-denials were secret and were continued by Jacinta and Francisco until their separate days of death. The simple and unsophisticated people of the region who believed in them came with problems and petitions as to saints already canonized, and while there is no overwhelming documentation to support such a claim, it does appear quite likely that within their own lifetimes the sacrifices and prayers of these children did purchase miraculous results.

In Fatima the village church is not far from the primary school and it became the practice of the children on their way to school to kneel and meditate before the Blessed Sacrament, referred to most always, and without affectation, as the "Hidden Jesus." Jacinta and Francisco, with their foreknowledge of death, seemed to feel themselves exempt from the dull routine of books. Consequently they would often remain before their Hidden Jesus for many, many hours. Even here, the villagers and the visitors to town would give them no rest. They would hover close to the children, pleading with them to place their petitions before the Virgin Mother.

"They seem always to guess where we are," Jacinta said, "and they will not let us talk with Jesus."

But this pursuit of the children occurred not only in church.

We were met one day (recalls Lucia) by a poor woman who knelt down before Jacinta begging her to request from Our Lady a cure of the terrible disease with which she was afflicted. Jacinta, seeing the sick woman in such a pitiful way, tried to help her to her feet but could not. She then knelt down next to the woman and prayed three Hail Mary's with her. "Our Lady will cure you," she promised the woman, and then instructed her to get up. Day after day she kept praying for the woman until she was cured and came back to give thanks to Our Lady.

There have been many indications of the value of Jacinta's intercession while she was still alive, as witness this incident referred to in Lucia's memoirs:

One of my aunts (Victoria), who lived in Fatima, had a son who was a real prodigal. I don't know why, but he had some time before abandoned his father's house and nobody knew what had become of him. In great affliction of mind my aunt came one day to Aljustrel to ask me to pray to Our Lady for this son and, unable to find me, she put her request to Jacinta, who promised to comply. After some days, he came home and asked his parents' forgiveness, and later went to Aljustrel to recount his misfortunes. Having spent all that he had stolen—according to his own story—he had been arrested and imprisoned in Torres Novas. He eventually managed to escape, and hid himself among some unknown hills and pine woods. Thinking that he was completely lost, he was seized with a sudden terror of the wind and darkness, and as a last resort fell on his knees and prayed. He declared that after a few moments Jacinta appeared and, taking him by the hand, led him on to the road which leads from Alquidao to Reguengo, making signs to him to continue on that way. At daybreak he found himself on the road to Boleiros, and recognizing exactly where he was he went straight to his parents' house, overcome with emotion.

Now he had declared that Jacinta had come to him and that he recognized her perfectly. I asked Jacinta whether she had in fact been there with him. She answered no, and that she did not even know those hills and pine woods, where he had been lost.

"I only prayed," she said, "and asked Our Lady very much to help him, because I was so sorry for our Aunt Victoria." This was her answer. How, then, can the fact be explained? God alone can answer.

Francisco, according to Lucia, at about this same time secured through his selfless prayers, the freedom of a man arrested for a grievous crime which, presumably, he did not commit. So strong was the evidence against the alleged felon, however, that it was not a promising task.

"Listen," Francisco said to Lucia and Jacinta when informed of the unhappy gentleman's case, "you two go to school and leave me alone with Hidden Jesus."

It does seem, examining the record, that the boy had a way with the Hidden Jesus, and we should perhaps include here the success of Lucia's prayers in behalf of her mother, who became gravely ill at this time. It is her sister, Maria dos Anjos, who has supplied us with these details:

Our mother was so ill that we thought she would die. She had long attacks of breathlessness, and the doctor said she suffered from her heart. It was a great sorrow to us because we had just lost our father. It was then that I said to Lucia, who was sitting on a bench by the hearth:

"Listen, Lucia, father is dead and if mother dies we shall be orphans; if you really saw Our Lady, ask her to make mother better."

Lucia didn't reply but she got up and went to her room and put on a thick woolen skirt because it was winter and raining hard, and went off in the direction of the Cova da Iria. When she came back she was carrying a handful of earth and told my sister, Gloria, to make an infusion with it for mother. She had also made a promise to Our Lady to return there with her sisters and go on their knees from the street to the chapel for nine days running, and during the same time to feed nine poor children.

Gloria prepared the infusion and gave it to mother.

"What sort of tea is this?" she asked.

"It's made of flowers," we said, and she drank it all.

Then the attacks gradually began to get less and she no longer suffered from breathlessness, but breathed easily and well. And her heart also improved, and within a very short time she was able to get up.

She was able to work again after this and did not seem like an old woman. We began at once to go to the Cova to fulfill the promise. For nine days, after supper—because in the daytime we had to work, and also we didn't want to be seen—we went on our knees from where the main gate is now to the little chapel. Mother also came with us, but she walked behind.

As for Francisco, a rather good glimpse of him has been provided by a former schoolmate, now a priest, who is the current director of the Seminary of Leiria:

I had the good fortune to attend the same school as Francisco Marto, from February to June of 1917. Francisco distinguished himself from the others by reason of his humility and kindness, virtues which, however, caused him much suffering, thrown as he was among companions under the influence of a teacher without Christian formation. He was very backward at his lessons, and was still in the lowest form, a misfortune which drew upon him the strictures of his teacher and schoolfellows. It is obvious, however, that he was occupied with the sublime thoughts which the angel had brought to birth in his mind, and that he cared little or nothing for the ordinary instruction of the school. Francisco would humbly bow his head and, we may be sure, with his soul united to God, received the censures of his master and companions.

At the break which we had at midday he would eat his lunch and stay quietly with a few other boys until the teacher gave the sign for them to go into school again. I remember playing with him and enjoying it because Francisco was always pleasant and friendly with everyone.

In the evening he went his way and I mine, which was in the opposite

direction, and for this reason I do not know how he passed the rest of the day. From February to May, the life of Francisco in the school at Fatima was more or less as I have described and such was the attitude of his teachers and fellows toward him. In the last half of May the news of the apparitions spread through the village, and the attitude of the school toward him began to alter somewhat. The teacher, a learned professor but a bad educator, took advantage of Francisco's scant interest in his lessons to dub him a fraud and a liar. He never ceased to point out his defects, I don't know whether with the intention of shaming him into greater efforts, or to induce us to take his part against the little seer.

We, mere children as we were, naturally followed the teacher's lead, and often joined him in humiliating poor Francisco. The worst of it was that our words were sometimes translated into actions, and he sometimes had to spend the recreation period pinned against the wall unable to free himself from the ill treatment meted out to him by certain stronger boys among us. This all took place during the last half of May and the whole of June. After the long vacation I entered the seminary and lost touch with the seers....

Another burden borne patiently by Francisco was the denial to him of his treasured Hidden Jesus until the day before his death. In 1917, during the peak period of the apparitions, both Jacinta and Francisco had made their first confessions, an occasion remembered very well by Ti Marto:

About that time, it must have been after the second apparition, I took the two of them to the church to make their confessions. I went with them to the sacristy and said to Father Ferreira:

"Father, here are my two children; they want to go to confession. Your Reverence can ask them any question you like." (I confess that I put a little malice into those words!) Then the priest replied:

"These things (the apparitions) do not belong to confession, my friend!"

"That's true," I said, "and if they don't belong I needn't bring them here again."

But the children made their confession, though Father Ferreira thought they should wait another year for Holy Communion.

The next year, in May, they went back to be examined in the catechism.

Jacinta answered well, but Francisco got muddled somewhere in the Creed—I can't remember where—and so in the end Jacinta was allowed to make her Communion while Francisco could not. He went home in tears, but there was nothing to be done!

From the day of his Lady's visit to the Cova da Iria on October 13, 1917, until the morning of Francisco Marto's death, a little less than eighteen months

had passed. He must, by then, have recited all the Rosaries she had asked of him.

He first fell ill around the middle of October, 1918, together with Jacinta, his other brothers and sisters and his mother, all victims of the malignant influenza epidemic of that winter. Ti Marto alone of the family was spared, and he began, in his faithful way, to operate within the stricken household what he called his "hospital."

When my wife went down with it too (he has rather recently recalled), I had all I could do taking care of the lot of them, going about my own work at the same time, and running all the errands as well. It kept a man on his toes, I can tell you, but God's hand always seemed close enough to help me. I never had to beg from anyone, and somehow there was always money enough.

Francisco, along with Jacinta, seemed from the beginning to realize clearly that this illness was less a burden or punishment than a passport to Heaven. If one could sift with the author through the inundating weight of evidence, he would realize that never for a moment was the supernatural out of their thoughts. For a period of two weeks, after being stricken, these youngest members of the family appeared to rally against the disease. But a relapse set in, and for Francisco, at least, it was so severe that he could move neither hand nor foot.

But unlike other victims of illness, they found the question of death or recovery robbed of its mystery. Our Lady appeared to them and dissolved any possibility of a riddle with her simple statement that she would come for Francisco first and for Jacinta not long after that. Their dry and fevered lips cracked under the strain of their smiles: There was no dirge for them, but only joy in their Lady's words. They waited anxiously for Lucia's next visit to their beds.

"Oh, Lucia," Jacinta revealed to her, "Our Lady was here. She came to us both. She is going to take Francisco very soon, and she had a question for me."

"What was the question, Jacinta?"

"She asked would I like to convert more sinners, and I told her yes, I would —yes, yes, I would. She said then that I must go to two hospitals, but not to be cured. I am to make further sacrifice for the love of God, and to atone for the sins of people against Our Lady's Immaculate Heart. That is what she told me, Lucia."

"Yes, dear."

"And you—you will not be with me when I go wherever it is that I must go. My mother will take me there, and I will have to remain alone."

Of Francisco's illness, his mother has told us this:

He took any medicine we gave him and he was never difficult. What it was he liked, or what it was that he did not like, he would not say. Just take them all

—milk if I gave it, an egg if I offered that. The meanest medicines he swallowed without making a face. He was so good and cheerful that we kept feeling he was getting better, but he always smiled and told us it was no use—Our Lady was coming to take him to Heaven, he would say.

In January, for the second time, his condition improved—so much so that he was able to leave his bed and go out for brief periods. It made us all very hopeful, but did not seem to impress Francisco. He always told us the same thing—that we must not be deceived, and that Our Lady was coming for him.

During this brief space of time when Francisco was sufficiently repaired to go on short walks by himself, his one destination was the Cova da Iria. Here, for as long as his slight store of strength would permit, he would kneel in ecstatic recollection of the Lady of the apparitions, who was to him not only the solace of his present trial, but the patroness and guarantor of the paradise he had glimpsed.

Ti Marto, looking back, recalls it was clear that some knowledge or certainty illumined the mind of his son. He was much too happy to be engaged in some marathon stage-play for which he had neither the talent nor the strength. Ti Marto became convinced that the boy would die as he so confidently and repeatedly declared. This assurance he reported to Francisco's Godmother who, in the country tradition, wanted to make a pledge of the child's own weight in wheat should he be cured.

Thus his seeming rally from his illness did not last. He was soon back in bed and his condition grew rapidly more grave. The influenza ravaged him, and fever shriveled and parched him like an old apricot left baking in the sun. His cheerfulness, and the smile that hovered everlastingly on his cracked lips were an agony for his parents to watch.

Lucia, of course, was better able to understand this tonic joy of hope and love that had conquered her cousin's physical misery. Better than his parents she knew the source of Francisco's unfailing happiness. She came faithfully each day to visit with him and with Jacinta.

"Do you suffer very much, Francisco?"

He nodded his little head. "But I do it for Our Lord and Our Lady," he said. "I wish I could suffer even more, Lucia, but honestly, I can't. Is the door closed tight?"

Lucia looked around and assured him it was. He searched then feebly but effectively among the bed-clothes until he was able to draw forth the penitential cord he had been wearing for these many, many months.

"I can't manage it anymore, Lucia. Please take it from me before my mother finds out." He passed the coarse length of rope to his cousin who folded it and

carefully kept it from the chance view of anyone entering the room. A little later on she was to accept a similar cord from the dying Jacinta, and secretly, before her own departure to the convent at Vilar, burn them in an open field consistent with the inviolate practice of all three children never to dramatize their penances and never to cheapen with pious display their love for God and His Mother.

"Lucia," the boy said, and she turned to him again, the cord out of sight. "I haven't much time, Lucia. Jacinta must pray very hard for sinners and for you, because you are not so lucky to be going with us. Our Lady has said that you will have to remain for many years. Pray for the Holy Father, Lucia—do you hear?"

"I hear, Francisco," she said, and quietly, devotedly, remained sitting next to him.

In the fourth and most recent of her memoirs, in which Lucia, under obedience, treats of these secret things, she has interestingly emphasized that while Jacinta's every effort seemed directed at the solitary object of converting sinners and salvaging souls from Hell, the primary motive of Francisco was the direct consolation of God and of Our Lady, Who had seemed to him so very sad.

Lucia's visits continued through the spring. It was the beginning of April now.

We were always glad to see Lucia come into the house (Olimpia Marto recalls), because it was beyond the gift of anyone else to liven the days of my Jacinta. My little girl would pass hour after hour with her hands held over her face, as if to hide what she was thinking, and when I would ask her what was on her mind, she would answer, "Nothing." But it was different, always different when Lucia came. It was her way, it was her gift to bring happiness. Like a sweep of sunshine she was, and I knew that when she was with Jacinta there were no secrets between them. They would talk and talk for hours and yet never a word of what was said were we able to catch. As soon as anyone came near, their voices would stop, and it was to all of us a great mystery.

"What was Jacinta telling you?" Olimpia would ask when Lucia was about to go home. "What were you saying to Francisco in his room?"

But there was never a violation of their most intimate common possession, the secrets told them by their Lady. Lucia would simply smile in her amiable way and go on.

Alone, the sick children prayed almost without ceasing, adding Rosary to Rosary in an unending attempt to polish each remaining hour. And then at last, in his final days, Francisco found himself unable to pray. Concentration was too difficult.

"Mother, I can't pray; my head keeps going around and around until I do not

know what I am thinking."

"Pray with your heart then, dear," Olimpia would advise. "It will be enough for the Lady to understand."

His condition grew worse. The mucus thickened in his throat, and his fever, though it seemed hardly possible, rose higher; he was without ability to take any food; he weakened and weakened as death came crowding near.

"Father," he said to Ti Marto, "I want to receive Holy Communion before I die."

"Of course you will, son, and I will go see to it right now."

With something less than crowning confidence, Ti Marto set off for the presbytery. Once before, Francisco, as a candidate for first Communion, had been denied his "Hidden Jesus" by Father Ferreira. But at just this time Father Ferreira was away, and in his place was Father Moreira, of Atouguia, who consented at once to come to the boy.

"On the way back to the house," Ti Marto tells us, "we said the Rosary. I remember it very well because I had forgotten my beads and had to count the Aves on my fingers."

Meanwhile Lucia had been hastily summoned at Francisco's request. As his prime confidante he needed her perhaps more than any living person. This is her own account now. Lucia speaks:

He had asked his mother and the rest of the family to leave the room because he wanted to tell me a secret. When they had gone he turned to me and said, "I am going to confession now, Lucia, and then I shall die. I want you to tell me if you have seen me commit any sin, and then I want you to ask Jacinta if she saw me commit any, either."

"Well," I said to him, "you were sometimes disobedient to your mother when she told you to remain at home. Sometimes you ran off to be with me; other times you ran off just to hide."

"I know," he said, "I did do that. Now go ask Jacinta if she remembers anything else."

I went in to see Jacinta who listened to me gravely and gave the matter some thought.

"You can tell him," she said, "that before Our Lady ever appeared to us he stole a tostao (about a penny) from Jose Marto, of Casa Velha, and that when the Aljustrel boys threw stones at the boys from Boleiros, he threw them too."

I went back and gave her message to Francisco and he told me, "I have confessed those already but I will confess them again. Perhaps it is because of those sins that Our Lord is so sad. I will never commit them again. I'm very sorry for them."

Joining his hands, he then said the prayer we had learned so well from our Lady: O my Jesus, forgive us our sins and deliver us from the fires of Hell; take all souls to Heaven, especially those who are most in need." He then turned to me and very solemnly asked, "Lucia, will you pray to Our Lord, too, and ask Him to forgive me my sins?"

"Certainly I will," I told him, "but if Our Lord had not forgiven them already, Francisco, Our Lady would not have told Jacinta the other day that she was coming to take you to Heaven so soon."

It was at this time that Father Moreira arrived with Ti Marto and heard Francisco recite those little sins that loomed so large in his own mind and his fervent heart. Ti Marto, standing well aside, continued to worry whether or not the priest would give the Eucharist to his son, since he feared that Francisco in his present weakness might do less than well with the catechism questions the priest would be required to ask. But it had all gone well, he learned from the priest, and to both of them Father Moreira was able to say:

"Tomorrow I will bring Our Lord."

On the radiant spring morning of April 3, 1919, the fields of the serra were rich with flowers, and the bright day glad with the singing of birds. Francisco tried vainly to raise himself in bed when he heard the tinkling of the little bell announcing the priest's arrival with the Sacred Host. Strength failed him, and he fell back weakly.

"You can receive Our Lord lying down," he was assured.

The priest then, wishing peace to this house and all who lived within its walls, placed the Body of Christ on the tongue of the little boy who loved Him so well.

Francisco died on the following morning, at ten o'clock, when strong sunlight was pouring through the open windows of his room. It is said that his shrunken face glowed with a kind of rapture, and that with sweet willingness, and in the absence of pain, he went to his Lady and to Jesus Christ Our Lord.

He was buried the following day in the little cemetery at Fatima, just across the road from the parish church. There was a nice procession. Four boys were dressed in white, and they carried the little coffin. Several men in green capes preceded the surpliced priest and gave a dressed-up touch to the occasion. Behind these, weeping, walked Lucia, and with her the members of the Marto family, all save Jacinta, herself too ill to attend.

There was at first no monument to mark his grave except a simple cross placed there by Lucia's hand.

## *Jacinta*

It is not easy to write about the final days of Jacinta. She simply does not sound like a child of eight or nine. A non-Catholic, not perceiving the force of love that drove her, nor familiar with the divine mysteries made clear to this child by angelic insight, might well dismiss her as a precocious and prattling little thing with no apparent design to her ceaseless mouthings other than to set a pall of gloom upon the everyday activities of everyday, normal people.

More truly, and much more fairly, Jacinta is a joyous person, and yet, at the same time, whether we like it or not, a duly commissioned prophetess of penance. Here was a child more of Heaven than of earth, and we will be wise to mark for our own instruction all that she has said.

For one who in the beginning had been so gay, and almost, we might say, over-cute, the rapid inroad of spiritual experience on her personality is unmistakable.

After the apparitions (Lucia has written), I never saw her drawn by any childish enthusiasm for frills and fancies. She was always serious, modest and kind, and seemed to carry the presence of God into all her actions in a manner more usual to people of advanced age and virtue. If children were not attracted to her as they were to me, it was perhaps because she did not know so many songs and stories, or perhaps because she was so serious for her age. If in her presence a child, or even a grown-up, did or said anything unseemly, she would say, "Don't do that because it offends God and He is so much offended."

Through the spring and much of the summer that followed Francisco's death, his little sister suffered greatly. After a siege of bronchial pneumonia, a punishing form of pleurisy set in. An abscess formed in the delicate membranes of her chest cavity, and there was an agony of unrelenting pain. Except for a few brief days of reprieve, she had not been able to leave her bed since October of the year before. Lucia came to be with her not only every day but for every moment and every hour she could contrive.

"I keep thinking of Francisco," Jacinta would tell her cousin again and again, "and of how much I would like to be with him."

But it is clear that Jacinta was living through a drama of which the world knew nothing. This made it no less real, but rather more terribly and intimately a problem to be met. Lucia's memoirs reveal unmistakably how the sorrowing child, as though she could pay the world's debts by herself, was bowed with thoughts of war and evil, suffering and horror, and the pit of Hell which awaited the lost.

"So many people will die and go to Hell," she said to Lucia. "So many

houses will be destroyed, so many priests will be killed. Listen, Lucia, I will be all right, you see, because I am going to Heaven, but when you see that light of which Our Lady told us, Lucia—then you must come to Heaven, too."

Very sensibly Lucia reminded her that one doesn't take a train to Heaven as to Lisbon. The choice of the time or the means, she explained, is never one's own.

"Yes, I know," Jacinta agreed. "That is true, of course, but don't you be afraid. I will pray very hard for you when I am in Heaven; I will pray for the Holy Father, too, and for all the priests, and ask God that the next terrible war will not come to Portugal."

"Do you suffer much?" Lucia asked.

"Very greatly," the child conceded, "but don't cry, Lucia, please—because, really, I don't mind. Just don't tell anyone else, especially Mother, because I don't want her to worry."

Jacinta, in the months of her illness, had been reduced from exuberant, bounding health to a state of pathetic frailty. Life clung as thinly as breath, and the local doctor, examining both her condition, and the limited facilities of her home, advised that she be sent without delay to the hospital at Vila Nova de Ourem, a few miles away.

The little girl did not protest, for the reason that she knew she was going, anyhow. "You will go to two hospitals," she had been told by her Lady, "not to be cured, but to suffer more for the love of God, and for the conversion of sinners, and to make reparations for the offences against my Immaculate Heart."

Does this seem a cruel and unnecessary burden for the power of Heaven to set upon a shriveled, powerless, dying child? Jacinta did not think so. She understood very clearly this reverse—gravity of divine Love. In joyous imitation of her Savior she accepted her Lady's directive, knowing beyond the wisdom of prudent and self-protecting men that the heart can best ascend to the Father of Christ when it is weighted with a cross.

"Your mother will take you to the hospital," the Lady had told her, "and then you will have to stay there alone."

The prospect of separation from her family and from Lucia was more punishing to her than the pressure of physical pain, however great.

"If only you could come with me," she said to her cousin. "How dreadful, really, to go without you. Perhaps it will be so dark in this hospital that I will not be able to see, Lucia, and in the darkness, too, I will have to be alone."

Early in July her thin little body was raised by her father, and placed as tenderly as possible on the family donkey's back. Her mother made the journey to Vila Nova de Ourem with her. She was at the hospital for a period of two

months, and though the treatments were radical and severe, they brought no visible benefit. It was a time of actual martyrdom, relieved by nothing but the two brief visits that Lucia was able to make.

And yet I found her happy as ever (Lucia has revealed), suffering willingly for the love of God and the Immaculate Heart of Mary—for the Holy Father, too, she offered her sufferings, and for all the sinners of the world. She was doing that which she wanted most to do, and it was of these things that we spoke.

By the end of August it all seemed depressingly hopeless. The hospital treatment was useless, and the expense to Jacinta's family was much beyond their very limited means. It was decided the child should come home. By now, in her side, she carried an open wound that required its being attended and dressed each day, not so much with the object of any cure, but to prolong such life as remained. After a while, in the rather primitive surroundings of home, the wound became infected, and Jacinta weakened and wasted day by day. At about this time she was visited by her warm friend, Dr. Formigao, who had come from Santarem to see her, and this is the priest's reaction to what he saw:

Jacinta is like a skeleton and her arms are shockingly thin. Since she left the local hospital where she underwent two months' useless treatment, the fever has never left her. She looks pathetic. Tuberculosis, after an attack of bronchial pneumonia and purulent pleurisy, is undermining her enfeebled constitution. Only careful treatment in a good sanatorium can save her. But her parents cannot undertake the expense which such a treatment involves. Bernadette, the peasant girl of Lourdes, heard from the mouth of the Immaculate Virgin in the cave of Massabielle, a promise of happiness not in this world, but in the next. Has Our Lady made an identical promise to the little shepherdess of Fatima, to whom she confided an inviolable secret?

Great as the child's trials must have been in this period, her eagerness for further sacrifices failed to falter. Her courage and resolution appear to have been almost fantastic.

"When I am alone," she explained to Lucia, her only confidante, "I get out of bed to say the prayer of the angel. Trouble is I can't get my head on the floor anymore: I tumble over when I try to do it and for this reason I have to say the prayer on my knees."

Lucia, moved with pity, and wishing to help her little friend, went quietly with this information to Father Ferreira, who reacted with the firm direction that Jacinta must not attempt anymore to get out of bed, but must be satisfied to continue her assaults on Heaven from a prone position.

"But won't Our Lord mind that?" Jacinta asked when she heard of the priest's directive.

"Our Lord wants us to do what our pastor says," Lucia explained and her cousin seemed satisfied.

Jacinta, after her return from the hospital at Vila Nova de Ourem, managed to attain a certain amount of mobility. On occasional winter mornings, with a reserve of strength gained through the night, she was permitted to attend the weekday Mass in the parish church at Fatima, which was closer to her home than the Cova da Iria, an area now forbidden her.

"Don't come with me to Mass today, Jacinta," Lucia would sometimes advise. "You just aren't strong enough, and it isn't a Sunday."

But the child, drawn on by that Hidden Jesus of whom she spoke so often, would persist, and go along on those spindly legs. Returning, she would be utterly exhausted, and obliged to fall into bed. Apart from these limited ventures to church, she was not allowed out-of-doors in winter. Lucia, however, remained with her almost constantly, in intimate sharing of that very private world these two possessed. They held no secrets from one another, but talked of the sacrifices they had made and their hard-won reparations to God as other children might discuss the playing of games or the dressing of dolls.

"Do you know why Jesus is so sad, Lucia? Because Our Lady has explained how much He is offended and still nobody cares; they just go on with the same old sins."

Recounting to her beloved Lucia, in their order and number, the sacrifices she had made in atonement for the sins of others, was not by any interpretation a boastful indulgence for Jacinta. First of all, no one else knew about these private chalices of sought-for-pain. Besides, both girls were actively and intelligently in the business of goodness. There was a serious and divinely ordained enterprise to be carried on, so that their counsels comprised a kind of essential inventory:

"I was thirsty, Lucia, and I didn't drink, and so I offered it to Jesus for sinners. In the night I had pains and I offered Our Lord the sacrifice of not turning over in bed, and for that reason I didn't sleep at all. What sacrifices have you been able to make?"

Lucia's memoirs, replete with the fiery self-annihilations of her cousin, fail to list with anything approaching an equal candor the gifts to God made by herself. This is understandable and as it should be, yet we would be reading the evidence badly not to conclude that Lucia was in full partnership. The seriousness with which she regarded their joint pursuit of virtue is underlined in many ways, and that she could see an occasional imperfection amid all the glow of her precocious cousin's sanctity is evident.

One day (she has written), Jacinta's mother brought in a milk pudding and told her to take it.

"I don't want it, mother," Jacinta said, then pushed it away.

My aunt tried hard to persuade her, but finally went away discouraged, so that when we were alone I said to Jacinta, "Well, this time you disobeyed your mother and you didn't offer to God the sacrifice you could have made."

When Jacinta heard this she burst into tears, and then she said, while I was wiping the tears away, "Oh, Lucia, I forgot this time."

Quickly she called back her mother and asked her pardon, explaining that she would take whatever her mother offered her. The milk pudding was brought back, and Jacinta took it without any sign of repugnance. Afterwards she said to me:

"Lucia, you don't know how hard that was to take!"

Some of the dialogue between them, reads coldly, seems almost too pious for print; yet it exists in the faithful record made by Lucia herself, and it is necessary here to complete the portrait of Jacinta.

Lucia, who was old enough, and for that reason eligible, frequently attended daily Mass and received Holy Communion, a privilege that never failed to fill her little cousin with rapturous wonder.

"Lucia, have you been to Holy Communion today? Then please come close to me won't you? You have our Hidden Jesus in your heart. Sit here. Sit close, Lucia. I don't know how it is, but I can feel Our Lord inside of me, too, even though I have not received Him. And though I cannot see Him or hear Him, I still understand what He wants."

Lucia, listening with tender understanding, took from her prayer book a picture of the Chalice and the Host. The sick child seized it and kissed it with passion.

"This is our Hidden Jesus, Lucia, and how I love Him, and how I long to receive Him as you do. Will I be able to go to Communion in Heaven, Lucia? Because, if I could, I would go every day."

Always in her thoughts and always at the surface of her speech was that Immaculate Heart of Mary of which the Lady had spoken. There were no doctrinal difficulties or confusions of meaning to impede her absolute devotion to Mary, the Queen of Heaven. Here the dying child is entirely explicit.

"I shall go to Heaven very soon, Lucia, and you must stay to explain to people how God wants to establish devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary all over the world. And when you speak of this to people, Lucia, don't be afraid to tell exactly what is true. Tell everyone that God gives us His grace through His Mother's Immaculate Heart, which He wants to hold close to His own Sacred Heart. The people must ask for peace through Mary's Immaculate Heart, because that is the way God wants it, and that is what Our Lady herself has told us!"

Love, perhaps more than fever, was consuming the fragile remains of Jacinta Marto.

Toward the end of December, 1919, Jacinta confided to Lucia that she had been privileged with another visitation.

"Our Lady told me that I am going to another hospital, this time in Lisbon, and that I shall never see you again, Lucia—you, nor my father, nor my mother. She has told me that I will have to suffer much, and die alone, but that I must not worry or be afraid, because this time she is coming to take me home to Heaven with her."

Most punishing to Jacinta was the thought of dying alone, unattended by the ones she loved. For reasons not clear—considering all the pain she had cheerfully borne—this final penance rested more heavily than all the rest. Lucia recalls finding her one day kissing a simple picture of Our Lady and beseeching aloud:

"Darling Mother in Heaven, must I die alone?"

Lisbon, though less than a hundred miles away, seemed to the child like the farthest end of earth. Perhaps to her parents and sisters and brothers it seemed equally remote, for when she announced to them that she was going to the great capital city, they declared it, at least among themselves, as the wildest of nonsense. Why Lisbon, after all? The hospital treatment at Vila Nova de Ourem had been utterly useless, and there appeared to be very little wisdom in repeating a first mistake on an even grander scale. And there was the question of the fantastic expense that would be involved, for in Lisbon, surely, in their grand establishment for the sick, the authorities would not be content with the humble fees charged at Vila Nova de Ourem.

The family was wrong. Events confounded them, and contrived the fulfillment of the Lady's prediction. One day an automobile—an item rarely seen in Aljustrel, stopped before the pale stucco home of the Marto's, and out of it stepped their priestly friend, Dr. Formigao. With the clergyman were the famed Lisbon physician, Dr. Enrico Lisboa, and Senhora Lisboa. We quote now from Dr. Lisboa's own recollections of that day:

In the middle of January, 1920, we went for a run to the Cova da Iria in order to try out the new motor car which we had recently bought. On our way through Santarem we went to pay our respects to Dr. Formigao, who we knew could tell us all about Fatima and the events of which he had been a witness. Dr. Formigao whom we had not known personally before, but who has been our intimate friend ever since, had the kindness to accompany us to Fatima on that occasion and it was through him that we came to know Jacinta and Lucia.

After a visit to the Cova with Lucia, in whose company we prayed the

Rosary with unforgettable faith and devotion, we returned to Fatima, where we spoke to Jacinta and the mothers of the two seers. They told us about Francisco, who had been a victim of the widespread epidemic of pneumonia influenza which had swept with such tragic results through Europe. He had, we learned, realized his only wish since the apparitions, which was to go to Our Lady. He refused all help and advice from the people who knew him in his life, and desired only death, with the least possible delay.

Little Jacinta was very pale and thin, and walked with great difficulty. The family told me she was very ill, which they hardly regretted, because Jacinta's only ambition also was to go to Our Lady, whose will it was that she should die in the same way as Francisco.

When I censured them for their lack of effort to save their daughter, they told me that it was not worth while, because Our Lady wished to take her, and that she had been interned for two months in the local hospital without any improvement in her condition.

I replied that Our Lady's will was certainly more powerful than any human efforts, but in order to be certain that she really wished to take Jacinta, they must not neglect any of the normal aids of science to save her life.

Impressed by my words, they went to ask the advice of Dr. Formigao, who supported my opinion in every respect. It was therefore arranged on the spot, that Jacinta should be sent to Lisbon and treated by the best doctors in one of the hospitals of the capital.

Ti Marto had listened with sober respect to the learned physician's recommendation. Where the money was to come from he had no idea, but he went, anyhow, to tell Jacinta that a decision had been made.

"Jacinta," he explains having said, "we are going to arrange for you to go to a hospital in Lisbon."

"Yes, Father," she said, and it could certainly not have been any surprise.

"It has to be done, child; it must be done. Otherwise people will say that we neglected to give you the proper care. And perhaps, after you are treated at Lisbon, you will be better."

"Papa, dear," Ti Marto recalls his daughter saying, "if I should recover from this illness, you may be sure I would get another. When I go to Lisbon, Papa, it means goodbye."

She was a wretched sight that day, by her father's testimony. Her little heart was enlarged, and her digestive organs by now were ruined. She was resigned to this last of her journeys, and had only one request—that she be allowed, before leaving the serra for good, to make one last visit to the Cova da Iria.

I arranged to take her there on a friend's donkey (her mother has told us)

because I knew she could not have managed to walk. On the way she asked to stop just once, and began by herself to say the Rosary. Weakly she picked a few flowers to put in the chapel at the Cova, and then was helped back on the donkey. At the Cova she just knelt down and prayed.

"Mother," she said to me, when she struggled up from her knees, "when Our Lady went away she passed over those trees, and afterwards she went into Heaven so fast I thought her feet would get caught."

Ti Marto went about making provision for his daughter's trip to Lisbon and her hospitalization there. He would accept financial assistance from no one, however slight his current resources, but there were other details with which, in his inexperience, he could not cope. A young nobleman from Vila Nova de Ourem, the Baron Alvaiazere, had become the family's good friend, and it was through the Baron that arrangements were made for Jacinta, her mother and her brother, Antonio, to be met by friends in the great capital city.

I went to see Baron Alvaiazere (Ti Marto has explained), and I told him what train they would be taking. "Antonio will tie a white handkerchief to his wrist," I said, "so that the ladies who are coming to meet the train will know who they are."

That night I gave my wife instructions for the following day.

"When you get on the train," I said, "you must ask the other people to excuse you, because your little girl is very sick and it is only because of this that she has an unpleasant smell. Be very careful that Jacinta does not lean out of a window when another train is passing, and when you are going through the Rossio tunnel (the approach to Lisbon), don't forget to have Antonio tie on the handkerchief."

Unquestionably the most punishing of Jacinta's experiences was the forced separation from Lucia, who recalls the bitter day:

"It nearly broke my heart to have her go. Jacinta stayed a long while in my arms, holding very close to me, and then she said, "We shall never see each other again! Pray for me, Lucia; pray for me very much, until I can go to Heaven, and then I will pray and pray for you. Never, never tell Our Lady's secret to anyone, not even if they say they are going to kill you, Lucia. Love Jesus very much and love Our Lady's Immaculate Heart, and do not forget your sacrifices for sinners."

Jacinta's mother has described the trip to Lisbon: We went to the station in a mule cart with my eldest son, Antonio. During the journey Jacinta stood nearly all the time by the window looking through the glass. In Santarem a lady came to the train and gave her some sweetmeats, but Jacinta wouldn't eat anything.

We knew nobody in Lisbon, and it was for this reason that Baron Alvaiazere and my husband had arranged for some ladies to meet us. They were to recognize us by the white handkerchiefs tied to our arms. But when we got out

of the train, Antonio, who knew how to read, went off to see something outside the station and I lost sight of him.

"Antonio, Antonio," I shouted out....

And then a few moments later he appeared again with the three ladies, who came up to us. They took us out of the station, and we went to various institutions but nobody would take us in. When we were nearly tired out from walking we came to an orphanage run by a holy nun who opened her doors to us, and could not have given us a better welcome. I stayed there with Jacinta for over a week, and then went back to Fatima.[\[28\]](#) Jacinta, in spite of weakness and physical pain, found contentment and joy in the orphanage on the Rua da Estrela, in Lisbon. Mother Godinho, the superior, was a woman of vast understanding and charity. The children of the house, with every good reason, called her "Madrinha," or Godmother, a term quickly adopted and employed by Jacinta herself. This house, in which the desperately ailing child and her mother, rejected by all other institutions, took final sanctuary, adjoins the Chapel of Milagres; there is a raised choir from which one can see the tabernacle and assist at Mass, celebrated in those distant days by an old and very deaf priest. The privilege was to Jacinta a boundless joy. The gift of being under the same roof sheltering Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament was as wildly beyond her hopes as, in her humility, she believed it to be in excess of her merits.

She went to the altar (her mother recalls) either in my arms, during the little while I was there, or else she was carried by the mother superior. I remember her saying to me before I left for home, "Oh, mother, I want to go to confession."

That day we went very early to the Estrela church, and when her confession had been heard she was like an angel with happiness.

"What a good priest that was," she said to me. "He asked me so many things."

I kept saying to myself how much I would give to know what the good Father had asked her to give her this happiness, but of course it is not anyone else's business what happens in confession.

Every moment permitted her was spent by Jacinta in the choir of the chapel. Sitting quietly on her little chair, for she was not allowed to kneel, she would remain with her eyes fixed on the tabernacle in prayer and meditation. If, below her in the chapel, she heard frivolous conversation, or observed in anyone an attitude of imperfect respect, she would mention this to Mother Godinho, not that she chose to be a tattler or a scold, but because she was horrified by any lack of reverence. Gravely she explained that Our Lady was always made unhappy when people did not respect the Blessed Sacrament.

The wise superior did all she could to accommodate the unusual fervor of

this child, without taxing her dwindling strength. To give her all the sun and air she could, she obliged Jacinta to sit at an open window overlooking the Estrela gardens. Here at least she could see the green of the trees, and watch the antics of the birds, and the companionship of the wise and gentle nun did much to repair the bitter loss of Lucia, whom Jacinta missed more than all the members of her family.

I soon began to realize that a little angel had come into my house (says Mother Godinho). Although I had long wanted to see the privileged children of Fatima, I never imagined that I would have the good fortune to shelter one under my roof.

We had some twenty to twenty-five children in the asylum. Jacinta was friendly with them all but she preferred the company of a little girl about her own age to whom she would give little sermons. It was delightful to hear them, and hidden behind the half-open door, I assisted at many of these conversations.

"You mustn't lie, or be lazy or disobedient, and you must bear everything with patience for love of Our Lord, if you want to go to Heaven." She spoke with such authority; hardly like a child.

During the time she was in my house she must have received a visit from Our Lady more than once. I remember on one occasion she said:

"Please move, dear Mother, I am waiting for Our Lady," and her face took on a radiant expression.

It seems that it was not always Our Lady in person who appeared, but a globe of light such as had been seen in Fatima, because we once heard her say:

"This time it wasn't like it was in Fatima, but I knew it was she."

That these later appearances of Our Lady to Jacinta were not mere hallucinations, is rather strongly supported by the child's conversations with Mother Godinho. The wisdom and understanding displayed by this unlettered ten-year-old, lacking anything more than the bare rudiments of religious instruction, would have been almost impossible if the knowledge were not directly infused. The nun was so deeply impressed, that she recorded the following in her own hand. It is Jacinta, speaking of sin:

"The sins which cause most souls to go to Hell are the sins of the flesh."

"Fashions will much offend Our Lord. People who serve God should not follow the fashions. The Church has no fashions. Our Lord is always the same."

"The sins of the world are very great."

"If men knew what eternity is, they would do everything to change their lives."

"People are lost because they do not think of the death of Our Lord, and do not do penance."

"Many marriages are not of God, and do not please Our Lord."

On the war:

"Our Lady said that the world is full of war and discords."

"Wars are the punishments for sin."

"Our Lady cannot at present avert the justice of her Son from the world."

"Penance is necessary. If people amend their lives, Our Lord will even yet save the world, but if not, punishment will come.

The reference here (Mother Godinho has written) is to a great punishment of which she spoke in secret, and was revealed in her last days. But there is nothing to prevent its revelation now.

Jacinta said that Our Lord was profoundly outraged by the sins and crimes which were committed in Portugal, and for this reason a terrible social cataclysm threatened our country and particularly the city of Lisbon. A civil war, or Communist revolution would be unchained, which would be accompanied by sacking and violence, and devastation of all kinds. The capital would be converted into an image of Hell. This threatened punishment should be revealed little by little and with due discretion-[29]

Jacinta, on priests and rulers: "You must pray much for sinners, and for priests and religious. Priests should concern themselves only with the things of the Church."

"Priests must be very, very pure."

"Disobedience of priests and religious to their superiors displeases our Lord very much."

"Pray, Mother, for rulers."

"Heaven forgive those who persecute the Church of Christ."

"If the government would leave the Church in peace and give her liberty, it would have God's blessing."

On Christian virtues: "Mother, fly from riches and luxury."

"Love poverty and silence."

"Have charity, even for bad people."

"Do not speak evil of people, and fly from evil speakers."

"Mortification and sacrifice please Our Lord very much."

"Confession is a sacrament of mercy, and we must confess with joy and trust. There can be no salvation without confession."

"The Mother of God wants more virgin souls bound by a vow of chastity."

"I would gladly go to a convent, but I would rather go to Heaven."

"To be a religious, one must be very pure in body and mind."

"Do you know what it means to be pure?" I asked her.

"Yes, yes, I know. To be pure in body means to be chaste, and to be pure in

mind means not to commit sins; not to look at what one should not see, not to steal or lie, and always to speak the truth, even if it is hard."

"Doctors do not know how to cure people properly, because they have not the love of God."

"Who taught you these things?" I asked her.

"Our Lady, but some of them I thought out myself. I love to think."

There is evidence that the dying, emaciated Jacinta in these happiest of her living days received from her Lady not only moral wisdom but actual glimpses into the future, and that she possessed for a while the gift of prophecy. Mother Godinho one day asked Senhora Olimpia, during a visit to the orphanage:

"Would you like your daughters Florinda and Teresa to enter the religious life?"

"Heavens no!" that honest and uncomplicated woman exclaimed, and the discussion seemed at an end.

A little while later, however, Jacinta, who had heard none of the conversation between the women, confided to Mother Godinho with great seriousness: "Our Lady would like my sisters to be nuns, although my mother would not approve. That is why she will take them both to Heaven before very long."

If this was an "irresponsible" attempt at prophecy it proved amazingly accurate, since shortly after Jacinta's own death her sisters, Florinda, seventeen, and Teresa, one year younger, followed her to the grave.

Jacinta also assured Mother Godinho, who had long expressed a wish to visit the Cova da Iria, but was faced with almost impossible obstacles in the form of her daily duties, that her desire would be fulfilled as soon as she (Jacinta) died. It happened precisely that way. Circumstances having prevented her burial in Lisbon, it became necessary for Jacinta's body to be accompanied to Vila Nova de Ourem, and the family vault of Baron Alvaiazere. Assigned to this task unexpectedly, by her own superiors, was Mother Godinho, who was able that same day to journey the brief way to Fatima, and pray at the Cova with Lucia at her side.

It is difficult to know the full extent of Jacinta's prophecies. One of the two doctors who treated the child in Lisbon asked her to pray for him when she got to Heaven. She courteously agreed, but then, as though in afterthought, looked at him gravely. "You, too, will be going to Heaven, Doctor, and very soon," she said. The physician died shortly thereafter.

As for the other doctor attending her, she predicted not only his own imminent demise, but the death of his daughter as well.

Another time, according to Mother Godinho, Jacinta was listening to an excellent sermon by a priest of high standing and exemplary reputation. Jacinta alone was unimpressed and turned to the nun with the grave prediction: "That

priest will turn out badly, Mother, even though you would not think it now."

Not long after this the unfortunate priest abandoned the cloth and lived in open scandal.

As to the operation she was to undergo, its outcome meant little or nothing to the child. Amid the hopes and prayers of others, she dictated a letter to Lucia, declaring very simply that Our Lady had appeared to her, and had revealed the day and hour of her death.

Jacinta's glad days with Mother Godhino had not been many. Less than two weeks had passed when Dr. Lisboa, in desperate hope of saving her life, succeeded in having her interned in Lisbon's Estafania Hospital. The kind nun accompanied the child to the ward and received the censure of both doctors and nurses for having accepted a tubercular patient in the orphanage. On a hygienic or medical basis, this criticism was likely justified, but it should be kept in mind that Mother Godinho alone had acted with charity toward this ailing child, who had been rejected by every one else.

Jacinta was merely one of many in the ward. There were no special attentions. There was no Hidden Jesus to fill her with consolation at each trying day's beginning, although Jacinta does seem to have managed, in her very own fashion, to have given the devil some bad hours even here. Among the visitors and nurses who came to the ward there were many whose manner of dress seemed to Jacinta both flamboyant and immodest.

"What is it all for?" she solemnly intoned. "If only they knew what eternity really was!" And of those doctors whose science openly discounted belief in God: "Poor things," she would say, "how changed they would be, if they knew what awaited them."

Within this period she revealed that Our Lady had once again appeared to her, emphasizing anew the prevalence in the world of those sins of luxury and carnality that cost the loss of so many souls. Penance, Jacinta said, was what the Queen of Heaven was asking in reparation of those sins.

Dr. Castro Freire, the child specialist, operated on Jacinta February 10, 1920. Her suffering was intense for the reason that in her condition nothing more radical than local anesthesia was possible. But the result was clinically rather good, with two ribs being extracted from her left side, leaving a wound in which a grown-up's hand could be comfortably inserted. Jacinta was an accommodating and stoic patient, and though the required daily dressings of the great wound in her side were a frightful agony, her only cries were repetitions of her beloved Lady's name.

Mother Godinho was able to lighten Jacinta's loneliness with daily visits to the hospital ward, and Dona Maria Castro, a patient of Dr. Lisboa, came

regularly to the child's bedside. Ti Marto himself, in his anxiety, made one brief call at the hospital, but was so beset with the illness of his other children in Aljustrel that he was obliged to hasten back to where his help was needed more.

Jacinta, in at least those recorded times when Mother Godinho was with her, bore her sufferings with the understanding and resignation of a saint, explaining quite calmly to the woman at her side, "We must be willing to suffer if we want to go to Heaven."

Her Lady did not desert her. At the conclusion of her most terrible suffering she was able to confide in Mother Godinho, "I am much better now, thank you. Our Lady said that she would come to take me almost right away, and that there will be no more pain."

And in fact (Dr. Lisboa affirms), with this apparition, there in the middle of the ward, her pain completely disappeared and she began to be able to play and enjoy certain distractions. She liked to look at holy pictures, one among them in particular—given me later as a souvenir of Our Lady of Sameiro, which she said most closely resembled the Lady of the apparitions. I was told several times that Jacinta wished to see me, but as my professional duties were heavy and Jacinta was apparently better, I unfortunately put off my visit until too late.

It does not appear that these last apparitions were in any way wispy or vague, for Mother Godinho, choosing a place to sit at the bedside, heard Jacinta protest with anxiety, "Not there, Mother, please; that is the place where Our Lady stood."<sup>[30]</sup> Jacinta Marto, an almost certain saint of God, died on the Friday before Ash Wednesday, 1920. And Dr. Lisboa's deposition is as follows: On the evening of that 20th of February, at about 6 o'clock, Jacinta said that she felt worse and wished to receive the Sacraments. The parish priest (Dr. Pereira dos Reis) was called and he heard her confession about 8 o'clock that night. I was told that Jacinta had insisted that the Blessed Sacrament be brought to her as Viaticum, but that Dr. Reis had not concurred because she seemed fairly well. He promised to bring her Holy Communion in the morning. Jacinta again asked for Viaticum saying that she would shortly die and, indeed, she died that night, peacefully, but without having received Holy Communion.

A young nurse, named Auroa Gomes, was the only person present. There was neither drama nor excitement at the moment of death. The nurse held to her solitary vigil while the hours moved on. The other children in the ward continued their sleep without disturbance. Only in the morning was it generally known that Jacinta had died, and Dr. Lisboa fills out the record for us here:

When I was told what had occurred during the night, I spoke to Dona Amelia Castro, who came every day to my consulting room for treatment to her eyes, and she obtained from certain members of her family a white first Communion

dress used by poor children, and money to buy a blue silk sash. Jacinta was thus laid out in Our Lady's colors according to her wish.

As soon as her death became known, various people sent money for the expenses of the funeral, which was fixed for the following day, Sunday, at noon, the body to be taken to one of the cemeteries of Lisbon.

When the coffin left the hospital mortuary, it occurred to me that it might be wiser to have the body deposited in some special place, in case the apparitions should later be confirmed by the ecclesiastical authorities, or the general incredulity on the subject be overcome. I, therefore, proposed to have the containing Jacinta's body deposited in the Church of the Holy Angels until its removal to some vault could be arranged.

I then went to see my good friend, Dr. Reis, the parish priest, who however demurred at the idea of the body remaining in his church owing to certain difficulties. However, with the help of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, some of whose members happened to be in the sacristy at the time, Dr. Reis was persuaded to give his permission to let the body remain there. Soon afterwards it arrived and was placed humbly on two stools in the corner of the sacristy.

The news spread rapidly and soon a sort of pilgrimage of believers in Fatima began, the faithful bringing their rosaries and statues to touch Jacinta's dress and to pray by her side. All this profoundly disturbed Dr. Reis who was averse to his church being used for what might well be a false devotion, and he protested energetically by both word and action, thereby surprising those who knew him as a most kind and courteous priest.

It had finally been decided that the body should be taken to a vault in Vila Nova de Ourem, and matters were accordingly arranged. This involved a delay of two days. The funeral was scheduled for Tuesday. The body would be taken from the Holy Angels Church to the Rossio Station. Thence, by train, it would go to Vila Nova de Ourem.

Meanwhile the body remained in the open coffin which again caused serious anxiety to Dr. Reis who feared an intervention on the part of the sanitary authorities[31] and he continued to be worried by the stream of visitors, which he avoided only by locking the coffin in an office. At last Dr. Reis, in order to avoid the responsibility of the open coffin and the pilgrims, deposited the body in the confraternity room above the sacristy, and handed the key to the firm of undertakers, Antonio Almeida and Co., who had been engaged for the funeral. Senhor Almeida remembers to this day, and in great detail, what passed on that occasion. In order to satisfy the innumerable requests to visit the body, he remained in the church during the whole day of February 23, accompanying

each group of pilgrims—whose numbers were strictly limited—to the room above, in order to avoid any unseemliness which might occur.

He was deeply impressed by the respect and devotion with which the people approached and kissed the little corpse on the face and the hands, and he remembers very clearly the live pinkness of the cheeks and the beautiful aroma which the body exhaled.[\[32\]](#) At last, on February 24, at 11 in the morning, the body was placed in a leaden coffin which was then sealed. Present at this act were Senhor Almeida, the authorities, and several ladies, among them Senhora Maria Pena (who died recently), who declared in the presence of various people who can testify to it today, that the body exhaled a beautiful aroma of flowers as the coffin was being sealed. Owing to the purulent nature of the disease, and the length of time that the body remained unburied, this fact is remarkable.

In the afternoon, which was wet, the funeral took place on foot, in the company of a large crowd. The coffin was finally laid in the vault of Baron Alvaiazere in Vila Nova de Ourem.

I remember that on that day the General Annual Conference of St. Vincent de Paul took place, and that I excused my late arrival on account of the work of mercy which had claimed my attention, namely, the burial of one of the seers of Fatima. These words provoked an outburst of mirth on the part of the assembly, composed, as may be imagined, of some of the most prominent Catholics of the capital, among them the Cardinal Patriarch himself, who joined in the laugh at my expense. Later he became a great admirer of Fatima, and declared that his great desire was to celebrate Mass in the Cova da Iria before he died.

It is interesting to record these curious facts, showing as they do the great reluctance on the part of the great majority of clergy, and certain of the laity in Portugal to believe in the events of Fatima. There were a few believers, among them Dr. Formigao, who assisted at the apparitions and bore witness to them by means of the written and the spoken word; also holy old Father Cruz whom I have seen in Fatima ever since my first visits there, and who was the first priest I heard in a Lisbon church publicly exhorting the people to pray to Our Lady of the Rosary at Fatima, at a time when the general run of the clergy were afraid to give public utterance to any shred of belief they might have in the revelations!

After all these years it is a great consolation to me to have been instrumental in arranging that Jacinta, in her last illness, should have been under the care of the best doctors and nurses in a Lisbon hospital. Thus the odious calumny, which has been spread abroad, namely, that the Catholics brought about the deaths of the two younger children in order that they should not be able to contradict Lucia's affirmations, can be most emphatically repudiated.

In Aljustrel, where the Marto family was already burdened with illness, the

news of Jacinta's death fell heavily. Ti Marto, trying to care for everyone, had been taxed with multiple trials to the limit of his strength and ingenuity.

After my Jacinta's operation (he has told the writer), I received a letter that said my little girl was all right. For this reason I was happy and encouraged, and I got someone to write a letter for me to Baron Alvaiazere, telling him how well our little one was, and thanking him along with all the good people who had tried to help in so many ways. But after about ten days a letter came back from the Baron, and it requested that I go to see him at once at Vila Nova de Ourem. Well, I went there to his house, and the Baron, a kind man, first told his servants to give me some food. He waited, and then he brought out a letter he had only recently received, and this letter told how my Jacinta, even though the operation had gone well, was dead.

It was a blow, and I did not know what to say. After a while I looked up to him and said, "Is there anything I must do that I have not done?"

"Nothing, Senhor Marto," he said to me; "there is nothing."

That is the way it happened and how it was. I had to go home and tell the family the terrible news, and then in a few days another letter came to me from the Baron, this letter explaining how I must go again to Vila Nova de Ourem to meet the train that was bringing back the body to be placed in Baron Alvarazere's family vault.

I went, of course, but when I saw the people gathered around the coffin that held my Jacinta—well, I just broke down, and I cried, believe me, as I have never cried before or since. It seemed such a sad, sad waste for her to have gone off all the way to Lisbon only to die without us, all alone."

For more than fifteen years the body of Jacinta rested in the tomb at Vila Nova de Ourem; or until, in September of 1935 the bishop of Leiria approved a plan providing for the remains of Jacinta to be placed beside those of Francisco in the churchyard at Fatima, where a special tomb had been erected. But before Jacinta's body was taken from the Alvaiazere vault, her coffin was opened and, to the prayerful wonder of all, her face was seen to be perfectly preserved. The incorrupt flesh of God's good servants, as we know, are frequently, although by no means necessarily, regarded as a sign of sanctity. A photograph was taken of Jacinta's remains and a copy of it sent to Lucia who, in 1935, was a Dorothean lay-sister. Lucia's grateful reply to the bishop was as follows:

I thank you for the photographs with all my heart. It is impossible to express how much I value them. From Jacinta's body I almost wanted to tear off that shroud and see the whole of her. I was so anxious to see the rest of the body that I forgot it was a photograph at which I was looking; such was my happiness at seeing again the most intimate friend of my childhood.

I have a great hope that Our Lord may concede her the halo of sanctity for the honor of Our Blessed Lady. She was a child only in years and already knew how to show God and Our Lady her love by means of sacrifice....

Jacinta was placed beside her brother in the quiet churchyard at Fatima, and on their tomb these simple words were inscribed:

HERE LIE THE MORTAL REMAINS  
OF  
FRANCISCO AND JACINTA  
TO WHOM OUR LADY APPEARED

Not until April 13, 1951, when the stately basilica rising above the Cova da Iria was finally completed, were their bodies moved—now to rest, perhaps until the end of Christian time, above that wild and rocky field where first their Lady said to them, "Do not be afraid."



## ***Lucia***

We return now to Lucia, whose age, at the time of Jacinta's death, was one month less than thirteen years. Any opportunity for normal, unspectacular adolescence had already been denied her. She was, at least in Portugal, a nationwide celebrity. Subject to the overwhelming and ceaseless attention of those who believed in her, she was also the target of skilful enemies who most emphatically did not believe, and were, moreover, determined to expose her as a fraud.

In Aljustrel the circle of affection was narrowing. Lucia's father had died, and although Senhor Santos had been neither a model parent nor an heroic defender of the faith, there is no mention of his failings in his daughter's recollections. "My dear father" it is her charitable choice to say, because she loved him. Properly and most decently forgotten are his bouts with the bottle, and forgiven, if not entirely forgotten, his frequently obscene references to the business of the apparitions.

How sad I felt when I was left alone (she has written). Within a short time I lost my dear father, and then Francisco and Jacinta. Whenever I could, I went to the Cabeco, and there, hiding behind the rocks and alone with God, I poured out my heart in tears to Him.

Lucia must be judged in the light of an almost faultless charity and modesty. She is not the heroine of her own memoirs, having deliberately assigned that role to Jacinta. She emerges from her memoirs as a true personality only where obedience to the bishop has obliged her. But there are things that we who have known the adult Lucia can affirm so easily: her wholesome gaiety and lack of pietistic sham, her practicality and unobtrusive gifts for leadership, her homely face and the joyous, searching eyes that have looked on Christ Our Lord. But truthfully, in this excellent friend of Our Lady, there is no mystical pretension.

Naturally she was saddened by the deaths of Francisco and Jacinta. Even though their deaths had been foreordained by the Lady in Light, Lucia's loneliness was bleak and hard to bear. She had no other confidants. The tremendous secrets imparted by their Lady were more difficult to carry alone. Lucia was, and of necessity remains, a strange citizen of the world, for the reason that she has seen so clearly beyond our natural boundaries, and knows from intimate and live experience what others know only through faith. How great have been the privileges of this nun who is now in the middle years of her life? Surely we can't say, because it is impossible to know. How great, we might ask with equal wonder, were those gifts enjoyed on a mountain top by Sts. Peter,

James and John?

The Church, in those first years of emotional and spiritual excitement at Fatima, remained aloof, if not officially hostile, to the claims of the children and the clamor of those multiplying thousands who believed the phenomena observed above the Cova da Iria to be the unmistakable work of God. But slowly, and with mounting effect, the pressure of continuing evidence obliged the Church officials to observe events more closely.

The diocese of Leiria, of which Fatima is a part, was restored in 1918, although the first bishop to establish his episcopate there was his Excellency Dom Jose Alves Correia da Silva, consecrated May 15, 1920. He took office in August of that year.

Dom Jose, a just man, didn't quite know what to make of Fatima. It was hard to resist one's own persuasion to believe. The sincerity of the children, both living and dead, was difficult to doubt, since they had stood with almost supernatural bravery in the storm of hostile ridicule and cross-examination. Any fair assessment of their testimony and behavior carried a fair man to that one inescapable conclusion regarding them: they were at the very least, sincere. And what of the evidence of October 13, 1917, witnessed by 70,000 men, women and children of mixed emotion and religious conviction?

One thing clear to the bishop was that Lucia, the surviving witness, should be removed from Aljustrel. This would facilitate not only a more thorough investigation of those great events in which she had played the leading role, it would as well relieve the beleaguered child of the endless questioning and badgering to which she was being subjected almost daily. The bishop hoped further, that his measure would test the sincerity of the ever-increasing line of pilgrims who were making their way to the Cova da Iria, since it was suspected by many that the prestige of this child alone, rather than any fair measure of true faith, was drawing the crowds to the shrine. If the child's mother would agree, the bishop decided, it would be wise to place Lucia in some boarding school where she would not be known, and where, for this very reason, no one would speak to her of Fatima.

Lucia's mother, hearing of this proposal, was avid for acceptance. Lucia herself—though with certain understandable misgivings, was equally willing. They went together to the bishop's house in Leiria.

"This is entirely secret," said Dom Jose to Lucia, "and for that reason you must tell no one where you are going."

"Yes, my lord."

"In the college you must not tell your identity to any one."

"No, my lord."

"And you must not speak again about the apparitions of Fatima."

"No, my lord."

It was June 13, a day of pilgrimage. Returning, along the steep road from Leiria, Lucia could see the tired, glad faces of the faithful who had been that day to the Cova da Iria. She drew her kerchief more carefully around her face, and unknown to them, she wept—not in distressed or stifled resistance to the bishop's disposition of her case (for in all honesty she welcomed and approved the solution) but because her youth was over, and a curtain was falling rapidly on this scene of her remembered joys.

There were cruel details attached to her departure. Obedience to the bishop required that it be revealed to no one, not even to her closest relatives and friends. Even Maria da Capelinha, the gallant champion of the children and their Lady from the day of the first apparition, was excluded from her confidence. For this reason Lucia was obliged to say goodbye to places, instead of to people.

On her last day in Aljustrel she walked the brief distance to the Cabeco, where first the angel had appeared to, Jacinta, Francisco and herself. She climbed the slope past the olive trees and the crooked oaks in oppressive heat. The field was wild with beauty. Rock roses were fat with bloom and the throb of the crickets filled the day. Lucia did not stop for sight or sound, but hastened into the shade of the rough, tall-standing stones where an angel had fed them the living Christ from a chalice that he was able to leave suspended in the air. She fell on the ground and remained there for an hour, repeating with whispered love, and in the rhythm of a sobbing she could not control, the angel's prayer:

"My God, I believe, I adore, I hope, and I love Thee. I ask forgiveness for those who do not believe, nor adore, nor hope, nor love Thee."

And then, with equal fervor, the angel's prayer to the Holy Trinity:

"Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I adore Thee profoundly, and I offer Thee the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifferences by which He is offended; and by the infinite merits of His Most Sacred Heart, and through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg the conversion of poor sinners."

Here in these paragraphs, if we pause for just a moment to reflect, is the essential meaning and purpose of Fatima. It should be kept in mind that this is a simple, and, we sincerely hope, an unpretentious book that should be of equal value to people of vast or little education. These two paragraphs of prayer are for rulers and beggars, philosophers and illiterates; they are for popes and peasants, cardinals and beggars. The question to ask is simply: who is speaking? And unless this story of Fatima is an unspeakable sham and a hoax, it is God who

speaks!

Why is it God?

Well, because, by basic Catholic definition, an angel is a messenger of God. It was an angel who said to a Jewish maiden in whose womb reposed the living Christ, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee" almost two thousand years ago. It is an angel now, in the span of our own time, who brings to the children of Aljustrel an equal gift, and underlines with almost commanding emphasis that Jesus longs to be not only with Mary, but with any and all of us who will have Him. There in terrifying clarity is the infinite breadth of His charity.

The message of Fatima is as plain as it is profound. Search these paragraphs of prayer again, and mark their powerful simplicity. The angel, as you will recall, is teaching the children to pray in a manner pleasing to God. The first of these prayers begins with the declaration, "I believe, I adore, I hope, and I love Thee"—simple and yet complete acts of faith, hope and love, or charity, if you will, since the two are the same. That is how one becomes a friend of God, by believing in Him and serving Him, by hoping in Him and loving Him. There is no obligation here for a man to build bridges or write books, or slay dragons or rip the skin off his toes. This, quite simply is the formula for Christian friendship: to believe, to hope, and to love. And having attained God's friendship, we are invited to share with Christ Our Lord the redemption of the world by asking the Father to pardon those who neither believe, nor hope, nor love.

The second prayer, addressed to the Trinity, alerts us to a decent humility, as it repeats the fundamental teaching of the Church that Christ alone is an offering equal to the majesty of the Power we have offended by sin. As God has given Himself to us, we give Him back to the Father in love and reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifferences by which He has been offended. And the angel asks us to pray, not through our own merits, but through the merits of the Sacred Heart, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, for the conversion of poor sinners.

What interpretation can there be, except that this is what God wants of us? We must provide at least some minimum of faith as a token of co-operation with Him. In considering the evidence of Fatima, let us not seek to be smart in any sophisticated way, for it will only defeat us. Let us seek instead, with Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco, to be obedient and good, and the wisdom of God will cling to us then, whatever our talents may be.

It was this intimate presence of God that Lucia, lying prostrate on the rough ground of the Cabeco, felt most clearly. Her joy therefore has ever since been deeper and more durable than any passing trial or momentary sadness. She rose

slowly, almost reluctantly from the hallowed earth, and walked from the Cabeco to that other field close by, that is known as Valinhos, where in August of 1917, as a reward for their constancy in prison, the Virgin had appeared to Lucia and her cousins. She paused here for a while in reverent recollection of her Lady's unwavering friendship, and then, on this last of her days within the area of home, she walked on to the Cova da Iria. At this rather late hour the small white chapel was deserted. It was June now, in the year 1920. Only days before had the faithful been emboldened to place within the tiny chapel an image of Our Lady. Of course it was not dressed in the light of Heaven. It was just a statue made of stone. Its value, for Lucia, was in its reverent, if totally unsuccessful, imitation of a beauty beyond comprehension. It spoke of faith and of love—and that was, really, all that any one could ask. She continued to pray.

At two o'clock on the following morning, while the village slept, Lucia Santos left Aljustrel and the parish of Fatima, to which she would not return for many years. Her mother went with her as far as Leiria to meet the morning train bound for Oporto, on the north coast of Portugal. It would be a journey of perhaps one hundred and fifty miles, and from Oporto, it was no distance at all to the convent at Vilar, where a new life would begin.

The statue in the little chapel at the Cova da Iria was acquiring an interesting history of its own. As earlier disclosed in this narrative, it arrived in Fatima on May 13, 1920, but rather sheepishly, like some contraband, hidden under farm tools in an ox cart. The reason, of course, was the fear of its being confiscated or destroyed by the civil authorities, or by those venturesome hoodlums the authorities sometimes encouraged. To know its history a little better we will have to go back a bit with the recollections of Maria da Capelinha:

Hardly a month had passed since the completion of our little chapel, when a gentleman named Senhor Gilbert arrived from Torres Novas and asked me, with some excitement in his voice, who had built this chapel. I did my best to explain to him how it had come about by the sacrifices and savings of the people who believed in Our Lady's appearances here, but he still looked disappointed and upset.

"My trouble is," he explained to me, "that I promised very solemnly to help as much as I could with the first building raised on this spot. I would have given a great deal of money for building a chapel here, believe me. Why, just one month ago there was not a single stone disturbed, and now I find that the work is already done."

I sympathized with him, of course; I told him it was a shame, but if he wanted so badly to do something, I said—well, he could contribute toward the building of a statue. "Is that right?" he said.

The idea seemed to please him very much. He said he would speak to his own parish priest in Torres Novas, and if there were no objections, he would have a statue made. This Senhor Gilbert was a great help, believe me, because it was not long before he came back and told me his pastor had no complaints about a statue, and that he would go right ahead with the arrangements.

This was a good way back—before Jacinta had gone to the hospital in Lisbon even, but this man was very sincere. He came with a sculptor several times to question the children about how Our Lady had looked. Other times he came to talk with Dr. Formigao, who was such a smart, good man, and such a fine friend to the children's families. All in all it took a long time for the statue to be made. Meantime, some people came from the Quinta da Cardigo and offered us an image of Our Lady of the Rosary to place in the chapel. I said—well, it was very kind of them, but the least we could do was wait until we heard from Senhor Gilbert. It would not be fair, I said, to overlook Senhor Gilbert after all his efforts and good intentions.

I did not guess wrong, for Senhor Gilbert was a man in whom you could believe. Sure enough, the first part of May, we hear the statue is now in his house in Torres Novas, and that somehow or other it was going to get to the Cova da Iria by the 13th of May, the third anniversary of Our Lady's first appearance.

Well, it got here, all right, in an ox cart, but for a while it was not brought to the Cova, because of rumors we kept hearing that the Freemasons were planning to blow up our little chapel and kill us all. Meanwhile it was kept in the sacristy of the church, where Father Reis, who was taking Father Ferreira's place, blessed it himself.

## CHAPTER 13

### Satan Stirs

That the fears of Our Lady's good friends were not unjustified, will be made clear by a description of the events that followed. In Lisbon, during that April of 1920, some of the more unbridled opponents of Fatima, learned that a great pilgrimage to the alleged "holy place" was being organized in Torres Novas for Ascension Day. The alarming news was that a commemorative statue was to be set up in the Cova da Iria by all the allied forces of stubborn superstition. Not only did the foolish faithful intend to pour out of Torres Novas, but other idiots were to journey in wholesale lots from Lisbon by motor car, horse, and by foot. Swarms of children dressed as angels would be marching on Fatima, along with multitudes of clergymen, including, of course, the sly, subversive Jesuits. Indeed, by these reports, the forces of reaction were to stage such a parade as had never been seen by intelligent eyes before. This situation was so provoking that it prompted a letter addressed to Senhor Arthur Santos, the mayor of Vila Nova de Ourem, whose authority, as we know, extended to Fatima. Dated April 24, 1920, it reads:

Sir,

Through our mutual friend, Senhor de Sousa, it has come to our knowledge that reactionary demerits in your county are preparing to canonize the deceased seer of Fatima, and so continue the disgusting religious exploitation of the people which has been set in motion. We beg you, therefore, to inform us as to what stage these manoeuvres have reached in order that we, the government, and your good self, may take such precautions as seem advisable to neutralize this shameless Jesuitical trick.

Certain that we may rely on your valuable help in this matter, we are dear Sir,

Yours fraternally,

Julio Ben to Ferreira,

Secretary of the Exterior.

The mayor's help could be relied on.[\[33\]](#) On the 30th of the month all the regedors [constables] of the county received the following circular: For reasons of public security, you are asked to appear in the County Hall on Thursday next,

May 6. The meeting took place as arranged, and after full discussion the mayor was satisfied. On the next day, the 7th of May, Arthur Santos received a telegram from the Civil Governor of Santarem, Dr. Jose Dantas Baracho:

To the Mayor of Vila Nova de Ourem

His Excellency,

The Minister Interior decided that repetition in Fatima arranged for this month must be prevented. Notify organizers of procession or other religious manifestation under law which will be applied in case of non-co-operation. Disobedience to be answered for in court, after legal notice given. His Excellency determines this matter to be brought directly to my attention without intermediary.

Jose Dantas Baracho, Civil Governor.

The zealous mayor lost no time, and on that same day sent instructions to his regedors:

By order H.E. Minister Interior, Fatima repetition arranged for 13th to be prevented. Kindly supply at once names, organizers and propagandists in your district in order that law may be applied in case of disobedience.

Suspecting, however, that his orders might not be fulfilled with proper zeal by those assistants, Arthur Santos decided to ask for troops from Santarem, and his request was promptly fulfilled.

To the Mayor of Vila Nova de Ourem

Armed municipal guard will be placed at your disposal, occupy strategic points, prevent transit Fatima procession.

Jose Dantas Baracho, Civil Governor.

And on the 12th, another telegram:

To the Mayor of Vila Nova de Ourem

According agreement made here yesterday force commandment will only prohibit religious manifestation on the spot. Strong armed guard dispatched locality.

Jose Dantas Baracho, Civil Governor.

For a valid account of the frustrated pilgrimage of May 13,1920, there is no better account than the one provided by Dr. Formigao in the first published book:

I arrived at Vila Nova de Ourem early in the morning on May 13 last. It was pouring with rain and a thunderstorm was in progress at the same time.

When I left Lisbon there were alarming rumors about Fatima, and people said that it was useless to attempt to go there because there were official orders to prevent transit through Vila Nova de Ourem.

For this reason, many people who had arranged to come with me did not in fact leave Lisbon, but I took a chance on it and came to see for myself how much

truth there was in the reports.

On arrival I saw two ladies, one young and attractive and the other older but distinguished looking, both of whom I knew slightly. Poor things, in that torrential rain! But they did not complain, and were full of faith and enthusiasm. Their only fear seemed to be that they might be prevented from arriving at the place of the apparitions.

With great difficulty we made our way to a little inn in front of the church, and there we rested until daybreak, because it was quite impossible to get rooms.

Very early in the morning we heard a troop of horses passing and ran to the window where we saw a squadron of Cavalry of the Republican Guard which was proceeding at a gallop in the direction of Fatima. The rumors were not, then, without foundation. We asked a servant what was in the air, but received the same reply. Nothing but rumors... rumors. But there were infantry, cavalry, machine-guns, and I know not what besides.

A general offensive seemed to be in progress, but against what, in the name of God! No one knew, said the woman, but one thing was certain; from Ourem no one could go to Fatima. Transport was available and in great demand at \$40.00 a cart, but all were eventually dispensed with to the intense annoyance of the owners, good Republicans all. They could not see why peaceful citizens should be prohibited from an excursion which suited them so well.

In Tomar, it seemed, the same prohibition was in force, also in several other districts whose authorities had forbidden the departure of vehicles.

While we were talking, a young man, owner a of a printing press in Lisbon, and shortly afterwards Dr. da Fonseca, a lawyer, who was defending a client in the local court, came up to us. We asked them if they knew anything. No more than we did apparently. People were being allowed to go as far as Fatima but no further. At about that time the rain stopped and I went out into the road where I watched the passage of carts and cars, trucks, foot-folk and horsemen—a regular excursion!

I wondered to what purpose all the prohibitions had been. I had expected to see nobody and yet here was this constant stream of men, women and children.

There were huge charabancs drawn by mules, filled with people roaring with laughter, laughing apparently at the mayor whom I could see in the middle of the road looking uncomfortable in a straw hat with a forced smile on his lips. There were carts decorated with flowers... motor cars blowing their horns, grand looking carriages, modest dog carts... men and women on foot, soaked to the skin and covered with mud, dripping with water, but happy, smiling. All this unfolded before me like a long cinema film. Where did all these people come from? From all parts, but mostly from Torres Novas I was told. And what was

the mayor doing flitting about in his straw hat? What new development was about to unfold? It was all most entertaining!

I wanted to go to Fatima with all speed but there was Mass to be thought of. After Mass, I lunched in great haste and set off on the steep road which winds uphill from Ourem to Fatima.

Coming the other way was a car travelling at speed, in which I caught a glimpse of rifles, fanning out menacingly. It was the mayor and his escort! "He's up to no good," observed a lad pedaling uphill on a bicycle. After climbing for an hour and a half we neared Fatima, and the rain began to fall again. At last we entered the little square facing the church. Everywhere we saw carts, carriages and cars parked. A great crowd of people, numbering thousands, was blocking the square and the church.

In the middle of the road a force of infantry and cavalry of the Republican guard was preventing the people from passing, or completing the remaining one and three quarter miles which separate Fatima from the Cova. I asked some bystanders whether anyone had in fact passed. Until midday, I was told, everyone had gone through, but then the mayor had arrived and forbidden it.

I asked the commandant whether one might go through, but he informed me politely that he had allowed people to pass until the mayor had given orders to the contrary. He was very sorry, but he had to obey orders. I went back and mingled with the enormous crowd which was gathered inside the church and on the porch, sadly commenting on the affair, and unable to understand what threat to public order could possibly exist in the Cova da Iria and not in Fatima, since the people were the same. It was perfectly ridiculous, everyone agreed.

Many people tried to get through the fields without being seen, climbing walls and other obstacles, and managed to arrive at the place of the apparitions, counting themselves fortunate to kneel there and say the Rosary. Perhaps it was this which put the government in peril!

Inside the church at Fatima, Father Cruz was delivering sermons and leading the Rosary, while many people were going to confession. A blind woman who had come at the cost of much sacrifice from Aveiro was leaning on the arm of a friend in the pouring rain which had begun again. She made no complaint, but on the contrary entrusted herself with great faith to God, and began walking toward the church.

A bearded individual, who told me he was a doctor, was explaining the providential reasons for the prohibition, to a crowd which had gathered round him. According to him, people had begun to turn the place into a sort of fair with music, etc., and obviously Our Lady did not want this. She had appeared in a deserted place precisely because she wanted to be loved and venerated in spirit

and truth, without accompaniments more reminiscent of the less edifying festas. Prayer and penance alone were what she wanted, therefore by this prohibition the authorities were all unconsciously satisfying the desires of our Lady!

The rain began to fall torrentially again, and everyone tried to find shelter underneath carts or on the porch of the church, which was already crammed to capacity.

At this moment I saw a Republican guard dealing out blows right and left on some peaceful peasants who were sadly surveying the scene from under their umbrellas. Surprised by the entirely unexpected attack, they fled without knowing why they had been set upon. Somebody went up to the guards to ask the reason for this. They complained that a man had tried to force a way through, and that when they prevented him he threatened them, and in the confusion that followed, the innocent suffered with the guilty as is the way of the world.

After this explanation, and order having been restored, I began to talk to some peasants and prudently advised them not to make any attempt to pass. Then one of the guards said to me with the utmost sincerity:

"If you only knew, sir, how I dislike this duty. I obey orders because I have to, but believe me, I hate it in my heart. I am religious myself, and I cannot understand why these poor people should be prevented from going to the Cova to pray. It's enough to upset a man. I have a sister whose life was saved by Our Lady of Fatima!"

As he said this, a drop of water rolled down his cheek, most certainly not from the rain which poured and dripped from his waterproof hood.

After this I went to the presbytery whose veranda, designed in the old Portuguese style, was being assaulted by those trying to find shelter from the weather. Here I saw one of the ladies who had been my companions in the morning, and she confided to me in a whisper that she was going to find her way to the Cova by a secret path through the fields. I saw her set off in the soaking rain and mud, delighted at the idea that she was going to get the better of the modern Herods in the government.

At last our coachman warned us that the road was bad, and that we ought to leave soon. We performed our last devotions, said our farewells and returned to Ourem, and thence to our home.

At the station, while we were waiting for the train, we met many people from different parts of the country who were returning home as we were. We saw the blind lady from Aveiro with a companion from Oporto, both of whom, in spite of being soaked to the skin, and in poor health, were none the less in splendid spirits. I saw a friend who was a jeweler in Lisbon, and many other people from the capital.

A respectable business man, apparently a Republican, poured forth his invective upon the mayor of Ourem because he prevented the progress of the countryside and obstructed legitimate trade.

"He's a fool," he exclaimed. "Just think of how much the cab men of Tomar and Torres Novas must have lost today!"

Senhor Arthur Santos, the mayor of Vila Nova de Ourem and its surrounding precincts, was not without his admirers, and accordingly, two days later, received this communication:

Sir,

The Portuguese Federation of Free-thought tenders you its profound sympathy in the action, so well in accord with Republican sentiments and free-thought, which you have taken with regard to the pretended miracle of Fatima whereby Jesuit and clerical reaction are trying to exploit popular ignorance. Certain that you will appreciate the extent of our admiration for your manner of procedure, we remain,

Most faithfully yours,

To this epistle, on June 5th, His Honor replied:

To the Portuguese Federation of Free thought

Largo do Intendente, 45. Lisbon.

I acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 15th and thank you for your congratulations which are however unmerited.

On May 13, thanks to the foresight of the Republican government, under that great patriot and illustrious citizen, Antonio Maria Baptista, reaction suffered a complete reverse, while the projected parade, whereby the ignorance of illiterate people was to be exploited once again, was brought to nothing, together with the new attack which was being prepared against the Republic.

However, these authentic enemies of the Republic and promoters of Fatima are not yet entirely disarmed, for they propose to transfer with all their pomps, the body of an unfortunate child and pretended intermediary of the Virgin, who died in Lisbon, to another tomb. They also still make use of a so-called seer, Lucia, an ailing child of thirteen years, in order further to exploit the ignorance of the people.

But such absurd projects can have no effect while a government such as we have at present, and associations such as the Federation of Free thought, fulfill their august mission, which is to combat lies and defend liberty.

The mayor also wrote to the regedor of Fatima:

I beg to inform you that in future no religious parade of any kind may take place in your parish without the knowledge of my administration. Kindly notify the parish priest and the promoters of any religious manifestation of my orders and

inform me personally of any incident of a superstitious nature which may occur in connection with the so called miracle of Fatima.

Meanwhile the faithful patrons of Our Lady, prizing dearly the statue donated by Senhor Gilbert, suspected with good reason that serious hazards lay before them. Maria da Capelinha continues her informal history of both the statue and the shrine:

We were so afraid of some profanation, but at the same time we were longing to be able to venerate a statue of Our Lady in the very place where she had appeared. One day Senhor Gilbert came and said that he thought it would be a good idea to veil over the niche so that people would think the statue was already there. Then we could see if anything untoward happened. So I put a veil over the niche and everyone thought that Our Lady was behind it. Nothing at all happened. So Senhor Gilbert brought the statue and put it in the niche.

### ***Chapel Bombed***

Months passed, and there began to be new rumors that the statue was to be stolen and the chapel burned down. So we thought it would be better to take the statue to my home and bring it to the chapel every morning. It must have been about the end of October, when my husband brought Our Lady to our home in Moita. We arranged a little altar in the sitting room, and put the statue on it with two oil lamps burning.

We were perfectly right to be afraid, for on March 6 of the next year we heard a terrible explosion during the night. The Freemasons had placed four bombs in the chapel, and a fifth by the tree where Our Lady appeared. The roof was blown off, but the bomb by the tree did not explode.

We wanted to repair the chapel at once but the bishop said we were not to do so till he gave permission. This made us very sad. It depressed us very much to see the chapel in such a state and we didn't like to stay by it. We used to go there, say our prayers, and come away again. The people used to come to our house instead and pray by the statue. Among them were Dr. Marques and Dr. Formigao. People used to kneel by the door and pray. There were always people there and Our Lady answered them just the same, so that people would have more faith. I was very happy to have the statue of Our Lady in my house. But now it upsets me to see people getting worse and worse.

On the 13th, a great many people gathered to take the statue in procession to the Cova da Iria. We had no litter for the statue but everyone wanted a turn at carrying it. There were many promises to do this, and so each one carried it a

little way. We sang and prayed as we went, and when we arrived there, we spent the afternoon at our devotions and had a procession; then we returned to my house. Oh, what happy times those were! As Our Lady passed, the people knelt in the road as they do for the Blessed Sacrament. It was beautiful in those days to see so many people thinking only of holy things. There was so much prayer, in fact we would spend a whole day from early morning onward in Our Lady's company.

Many came to fulfill their promises and light candles; others came to ask for certain graces, but everyone went away happy.

A poor woman from Tomar took earth away from here to make infusions and cure sick people because in those days there was no water. They dug up the earth near the tree and rubbed the sick with it. Some people ate it and were better afterwards. Sometimes, even ladies would rub it on their well-dressed little children without minding the dirt!

In Alqueidao there was a girl who had been paralyzed for seven months. Her parents did not have her treated, and she was very poor. One day Our Lady of Fatima appeared to her and told her that she would cure her if her mother would go to the Cova and take some earth from under the oak tree and eat some of it during a novena. It all happened as Our Lady had said, and the girl was perfectly cured.

Another time I saw a man from Torres Novas in tears near the big oak tree. I went and asked him what was the matter, and he told me his story. He had had an open wound in the leg for twenty-four years which was always full of pus and prevented him from working or even moving. The wound absolutely refused to heal, and he said to me:

"My wife came to Fatima and took away some earth to make an infusion to wash my wound with. I did not want her to do this because the wound needed cleanliness and the mud would certainly make it worse. But my wife, who had great faith, said that many people had been cured with the earth, and although I had no faith at all in God nor any religion, she insisted so much, that at last I let her have her way. Every day for nine days she washed the wound with that mud and each day it healed a little more, until at the end of the novena it was perfectly cured. I burst into tears, took off the bandages and came here on foot although I couldn't move before!"

Another time it was a consumptive from Tomar, also an unbeliever. His wife told him that they would go to Fatima or at least make a novena and drink an infusion of the earth under the tree where Our Lady had appeared. But he wouldn't hear of anything of the kind. His wife insisted so much that in the end he consented to drink the infusion, though without faith or devotion. In spite of

this, Our Lady cured him, and in a few days he was strong and healthy again.

From this time people came every day to get the earth for their sick. We dug it up in spoonfuls, and the people took it away in their handkerchiefs or in paper bags. On the 13th we would give out two or three sackfuls of earth from an open trench by the tree of the apparitions. At night we filled up the trench again with earth from somewhere else.

A series of seemingly miraculous cures that sheer cynicism and derision could not dispel, did much to increase devotion at the Shrine of Fatima in those early days.

They came from everywhere with their afflictions and their miseries (Maria da Capelinha tells us). Even before Jacinta died, and before the chapel was even begun, I remember them coming with their troubles and their sicknesses. It was the time of the influenza that was so bad, and one day Friar David, from St. Caterina's came to give the first sermon ever delivered at the Cova. Everyone was so worried about the influenza and so many were already afflicted. We took our own saints in the procession—St. Lucy, I remember, Our Lady of the Rosary, and other statues. Friar David, a wise and good man, looked at the people then.

"This is all very well, my children," he said, "but such a devotion is worth nothing without the important thing—amendment of life!"

Yes, Jacinta herself was there that day, very weak with her sickness, and the people were weeping in sorrow over this epidemic. Our Lady heard the prayers they offered, because from that day on, we had no more cases of influenza in our district. From then on, as you might expect, the devotion grew greater, and after the chapel was built, there were thousands and thousands who came, even though there was not one drop of water in the place for them.

This lack of water continued until October 12, 1926, when the bishop of Leiria made his first visit to the Cova da Iria. Seeing the total aridity of the place, the bishop assigned to Senhor Carreira, the husband of Maria da Capelinha, the chore of opening a well.

At first (by Maria's account) we thought of trying to open it about eighty yards from the chapel, near a fig tree, but in the end it was the suggestion of Senhor Jose Alves that was followed. Dr. Marques dos Santos, the prior of St. Caterina's was there, along with the Vicar of Olival.

"I am sure it is no use digging a well at this spot," Jose Alves said.

"Then where would you suggest?" the Vicar asked him.

"Right there," Jose replied, and he pointed to the place where the Cova was deepest. "Even after a month without rain, your reverence, there is always some moisture and some reeds growing there."

Well, the work began, and when we had hardly worked half a day, we hit

rock.

"What happens now?" the priests wanted to know.

"Now we blast the rock," was our reply, and we went to get the things we would need. Afterwards the water came up with great abundance, even though we did not finish the well. It remained like that, unfinished, until the following year.

Whether or not this water appeared in the Cova da Iria miraculously, it would have been difficult to dissuade the people of the serra from their conviction that another wonder had risen in their midst.

They came here (Jose Alves testifies) with their bottles and their pitchers which they filled and took home for their sick to drink and to wash their wounds in. Everyone had the greatest faith in Our Lady's water, and she used it to cure their wounds and their pains. Never did Our Lady perform so many miracles as at that time. I saw people with terrible legs that were running with pus, but when they washed themselves with the water they were able to leave their bandages behind, because Our Lady had cured them. Other people knelt down and drank that earthy water, and were cured of serious internal diseases.

It does seem, examining not this fragment of evidence, but the total record, that Mary the Queen of Heaven, does have a way of scoffing at the hygienic fears of the meticulous, working her wonders with elements that would almost certainly, on a natural level, bring nothing but further infection and new complications to people already sick. At the Cova da Iria, those officials responsible for the public health, became in time seriously alarmed. In July of 1927, a new mayor of Vila Nova de Ourem, Senhor Antonio Pavilon, sent this communication to the regedor of Fatima:

My attention has been called by the Sub delegate of Public Health in this county, to an open ditch of water which Manuel Carreira of Moita has dug in the Cova da Iria. This water is used by persons suffering from exterior and interior diseases in such a manner that I have resolved to call the said Carreira, with yourself as intermediary, before the administration of this county, and call upon him to cover this ditch which is an immediate danger to public hygiene. Will you kindly inform me without delay as to what can be done in this case?

(Signed) Pavilon.

Mayor Pavilon, however, had reason to know that this particular regedor was a gentleman strongly disinclined to interfere in the matter. For this reason he travelled to Fatima himself, taking with him the Sub-delegate of Public Health, Dr. Joaquim Francisco Alves. They visited the Cova da Iria, and then had a talk with the local pastor, Father Ferreira, who recalls the conversation:

"The place is disgusting," Dr. Alves declared. "It must be covered over at

once. It's a disgrace to the parish."

"Faith never hurt anyone," I replied. "It is already a miracle that such dirty, impure water has not once done any harm to those who drink it."

But neither the seriously worried mayor, nor the sub-delegate, was in the business of miracles. They impressed on Father Ferreira that if the well was not covered promptly he would be held accountable for any illnesses that occurred through this neglect. Father Ferreira said nothing, but was distressed by the affair. After all, if the town regedor did not dare offend the religious sensibilities of the people, how was he, their parish priest, to persuade them they were doing anything wrong? Consequently, a whole year later, Mayor Pavilon found himself submitting once more, an official reminder to the Sub-delegate of Public Health:

It appears that the well in the Cova da Iria continues to remain open, constituting a menace to public health and sanitation, in view of the fact that the said water is full of dirt and microbes. I, therefore, request your advice on the matter, and await your suggestions for the destruction of this ditch, which I am determined to effect as soon as possible.

Eventually, and perhaps quite properly, the bishop of Leiria directed that the well be deepened and covered. This work was carried out under the supervision of the mayor, Father Ferreira, and the Sub-delegate, Dr. Alves, who had heard alarming reports that the water had been poisoned. In time, however, and for reasons not clear to us, Dr. Alves declared the water to be entirely drinkable. Excepting only the Chapel of the Apparitions, the fountain that rises above the well is the oldest of the structures we are able to see today within the Sanctuary of the Cova da Iria.

Let's not make the mistake of assuming them ten cents a dozen in this or any year, but the author himself has been present at almost every conceivable kind of physical cure at Fatima. We who have had the privilege of living close beside the Cova da Iria do not face the problem of merely believing in Mary's powers of intercession. By God's infinite gift we are enabled to know them, and to understand the actual slightness of physical prodigy when it is placed against the harvest of souls Our Lady has come to gather for her Son.

Lucia Santos, the principal witness to the events this book describes, is today a Carmelite nun, living without distinction from her sisters in religion at Coimbra, Portugal. The cloistered life, embracing the hard rule of Carmel, has been her glad choice, not a chore assigned, and she is as happy there as one can be on this side of a paradise already glimpsed, then torn from the favored visionary like the stubborn strings of a heart. Sister Lucia, the Carmelite, is a reflective and mature woman in her forties. Wise in ways that surpass our unaided understanding, she has remained as plain and joyful. Her personality

(considering always Our Lady's guarantee to her of Heaven) supports the hardy maxim that there is no such thing as a gloomy saint.

## CHAPTER 14

### Sister Lucia

Naturally the story of Fatima cannot be concluded while Lucia lives, nor while that part of the "secret" to be revealed in 1960 is still undisclosed. Like the mayor of Vila Nova de Ourem, we are anxious to know what that disclosure will prove to be, though for different reasons.

Lucia's life away from Aljustrel began on June 17, 1921, with her journey to the convent school the bishop of Leiria had prescribed for her. She was then fourteen, and early one morning, as Mass was beginning, she entered the chapel of the Dorothea nuns at Vilar, Portugal. Not betraying her presence there, she knelt in reverent silence, beholding the tabernacle before her and rejoicing to be where she wanted most to be—beneath the roof that sheltered the Hidden Jesus and herself.

It was not otherwise a day of triumph. After this first Mass she was taken to see the mother superior, a cultivated lady who did not react to the occasion with any display of joy. It was taxing enough for this woman to suppress automatic groans of dismay as she examined Aljustrel's most celebrated citizen. Poor Lucia, whom the Lord had not designed in the routine patterns of beauty, just stood there—rough-handed, ungainly, and all but frankly ugly, with her thick lips and her obstinate expression. To the chaplain of the convent, present at the interview, the mother superior remarked under her breath: "What a strange creature from the hills!"

The chaplain did not argue.

We can be certain Lucia understood the dismal impression she made, for whether polished and primped by her mother for attendance at a party, or windswept and smudged by a train ride, with her thick hair standing straight, Lucia was intelligent, deeply sensitive, and unfailingly alert. Her gifts for comedy, kindliness, and light-hearted nonsense were not resources she could demonstrate in her own behalf like a trained comedienne. This was a side of the child that only her friends or her family could have explained to the shocked superior. Her humility was from the beginning genuine. Very likely in the presence of the Reverend Mother she felt like one of the rocks in the convent

wall. She was aware that at Vilar she would be treated with scant consideration and no distinction. Actually such identity as she already possessed was abruptly taken away.

"When you are asked your name," the superior instructed her, "you are to say Maria das Dores."

"Yes, Reverend Mother."

"And when you are asked where you have come from you are to say that you have lived near Lisbon."

"Yes, Reverend Mother."

"You are not to speak of the events at Fatima to anyone. You are to ask no questions and to answer none."

"No, Reverend Mother."

These blunt commands so readily obeyed, were not transgressed in the length of Lucia's residence at the school. She was, of course, a student at Vilar, and not a professed candidate for acceptance into religious life; even so, never once in these four years did she attempt deliberately to emerge from the obscurity of convent life. The wishes of her superiors were fulfilled with an ungrudging willingness that matched her fidelity to the secret of the Virgin Mother. How much of her ungoverned time was spent in meditation or at formal prayer we cannot know, but it is certain that Heaven assisted her. Years later, when the hour arrived for revealing at least part of her carefully guarded secret, she performed this duty with artless simplicity—rocking the Catholic world with her bombshell of prophecy, yet with none of the posture or pride toward which a prophetess might be tempted. Her consistency of character from the first apparition to the present day has been an endorsement of her wholesome reliability. Speaking of those years in the convent school at Vilar, she states very simply:

"I lived exactly as one of the others."

More than the others, however, she had surrendered her own identity. The sister portress, in reply to inquiries concerning the famous Lucia Santos of Fatima, was able to say without mental reservation:

"We have no one known as Lucia here."

Lucia as such had disappeared. The pleasant, obliging, and somewhat homely girl was to her classmates simply Maria das Dores, from somewhere close to Lisbon. Along with the others she went daily to classes and prepared for the primary examinations. It was here alone that an unadvertised exception was made because Lucia as Maria das Dores, could not sit for these final tests, the use of an assumed name being forbidden. We do not know, but we sincerely doubt, that this caused her any distress.

The four years at Vilar moved along without any mention of Fatima. No

letters were allowed to reach her unread, nor did the vigilance of her superiors permit her to come in contact with any religious pictures or objects that could suggest to her the apparitions or the growing devotion at the shrine. But toward the end of these school years the arrival of a new superior altered the situation to some degree. This lady was more than intrigued. Observing the plain, unassuming girl on whom it was alleged such heavenly favor had fallen, she determined to obtain from the bishop of Leiria a reversal of his decision that the subject of Fatima not be mentioned in Lucia's presence. She was, moreover, successful, although her first inquiries did not gain much response. Lucia seemed not only reluctant to speak, but clearly defensive in this matter. The new Mother Superior, with her eager efforts unrewarded, then said to the girl, "I suppose you have forgotten all about what happened at Fatima, haven't you?"

Blushing deeply, with her glance cast down, Lucia said promptly, "Forgotten, Mother? But I am always thinking of it."

Her sincerity did not escape the nun. Her development, and especially her spiritual growth, had already attracted the attention of others. Her utter candor, cordiality and lack of sham had done much to dispel the earlier suspicions of many. Meanwhile her true and deep desire to be a Carmelite had awakened. With thrilled avidity she read the life of Saint Therese of Lisieux, a modern daughter of Carmel, and confided her enchantment to the new superior.

"You are not strong enough for the austeries of the Carmelites, child," she was advised. "Choose another Order."

Lucia did not dissent from this, nor did she reveal her disappointment. Shortly thereafter, she declared her intention to be a Sister of Dorothea, and when asked why she wished to enter religion at such an early age, she answered simply, "So that I may go more often to chapel."

This uncomplicated reason was entirely true, but it was also a modest mask for the deepest desires in her heart. Her superior, not completely convinced, said to Lucia, "You are still too young and would be wise to wait for a while."

She waited faithfully and without complaint. She waited so long and in such silence that it was concluded by the Reverend Mother that her desires had been momentary and superficial, betraying a lack of true vocation. But the Mother General of the Dorothea Order, discreetly withdrawn from direct contact with Lucia, had been carefully watching her development. One day she asked Lucia's superior if the child had ever again expressed a wish to enter religious life. Hearing that she had not, she decided to question the girl herself.

"Maria das Dores, have you abandoned all thought of entering religion?"

Lucia raised her eyes to meet the glance of this important woman.

"Never, Mother, not for one moment have I forgotten, except—"

"Except what, my child?"

"That I was told to wait—and have waited."

Lucia entered the Dorothea novitiate at Tuy, Spain, in 1925, for the commanding reason that Portuguese convents were at that time forbidden by law to receive candidates to the religious life. Having formally entered the Dorothea novitiate, it did seem as though Lucia had abandoned forever her preference for the cloistered life of Carmel. The author, however, has learned from a priest very close to Lucia that on the eve of her profession as a Dorothea, she revealed to him her hidden but live desire to be a Carmelite. This is further supported by Lucia's sister, Maria dos Anjos, who claims to have had long knowledge of Lucia's yearning.

In Spain she entered into total obscurity. At home, with her whereabouts unknown, a malicious rumor began to prosper that she had disappeared through the slick and crafty manoeuvres of a political faction dominated by the Church. Supporting this slander was a popular and widely circulated report that the deaths of her cousins, Francisco and Jacinta, had not been natural, but were the result of a determination to keep them from denying the alleged miracles at the Cova da Iria. One day Senhor Arthur dos Santos, the energetic mayor of Vila Nova de Ourem, summoned Lucia's mother to his presence.

"Where is your daughter?" he demanded. "What is she doing?"

Maria Rosa, who in earlier crises appears to have been a hand-wringing lady of some instability, was this time equal to her task.

"My daughter is where she wants to be," she said, "and where I want her to be. I will not say anything more."

The subject was closed and Maria Rosa at last had found a fair degree of inner peace. She felt no longer abused nor imposed upon by make-believe angels and virgins. She felt that Lucia was where she belonged, in a convent, out of trouble. She was herself very much relieved.

In Spain, as a novice, Lucia knew nothing of the developments at Fatima. As at Vilar, the subject was proscribed. Not one of the medals or pictures that circulated so freely everywhere was allowed to reach her hands. No mention was made of the growing devotion to Our Lady of Fatima. If the pilgrims, in ever increasing numbers were crowding the hills of Serra da Aire, it was not for her to rejoice. She simply did not know. This sadness was unrelieved until a Jesuit priest, arriving at the convent, persuaded himself that Lucia was entitled to know the truth about Fatima. She listened without emotional display while he told of the increasing devotion at the shrine, of the vast increase of faith, and of the flowering of love for Lucia's Lady. Blushing just a little the young novice said very simply to the priest:

"I thought it would be like that."

Shortly thereafter Lucia saw for the first time a statue of Our Lady of Fatima in one of the convent corridors; later, in the chapel, she found a medal, struck with a similar image, that had been left on one of the benches. This much and no more did she know about Fatima, since she asked no questions directly.

On the great day of her profession as a Sister of Dorothea at Tuy, Lucia was interviewed by a priest from Fatima and she asked him if many pilgrims still journeyed there. Fearing that a truthful answer might tempt the newly professed nun to vanity, he was evasive, and Lucia, displaying for the first time her genuine feelings, said decisively to the priest:

"But people should go there, Father, as a sign of their gratitude to our Lady and their love for her."

Lucia was professed as a nun on October 3, 1928. Her mother was there, having brought from Aljustrel the one gift that Lucia was willing to accept—a hive of bees, a simple, home-made contraption fashioned of cork that would supply the community with honey.

The years at Tuy were blessedly happy. Her convent life was based upon exact fulfillment of the rules, a deep devotion to prayer and meditation. At the Christmas festivals, her friends recall she was always the busiest at planning the plays and designing scenes, always among the most spontaneous of impromptu singers, witty, often comic, and forever herself. The passing of the years have not changed Sister Lucia as much as they have brought to her maturity and fulfillment.

One day, from the city of Tuy, she ventured across the international bridge to the Portuguese town of Valenca to do some necessary shopping with another sister. They were stopped on the street by some people who recognized their habits.

"You are Dorotheas, aren't you? Have you come from Tuy?"

"Yes, Madame," said Lucia.

"We are going there ourselves," one woman said. "We want to see Lucia, the seer of Fatima."

"Really?"

"She is there, isn't she?"

"No, Madame," Lucia said politely, "she is in Portugal."

Disappointed, the woman sighed, then looked hopefully at Lucia.

"But if she were in Tuy, Sister, would we not be able to see her?"

"Certainly, Madame."

"And how would we go about it?"

"Well, just by looking at her, Madame, as you are looking at me."

Reference is made to the several appearances of Our Lady to Lucia in the convent at Tuy.<sup>[34]</sup> We are by no means certain of this, but it does seem probable that the first of these heavenly favors was granted in the following incident. Frequently, to test Lucia's sincerity and humility, the superior, with feigned severity, would assign the young religious candidate to the most repugnant tasks her own imaginings were able to provide. One day, and perhaps with misgivings, she sent Lucia to empty an especially nauseous cesspool. Certainly the girl was no plumber, and the task was new, yet she went without protest or hesitation to undertake the chore. After a time, though covered with filth, Lucia returned to the mistress of the house, her face transfigured with joy. The superior fell back, not in recoil from the clinging evidence of the work just done, but from the unearthly rapture on Lucia's face.

"What is the matter?" she demanded. "What has happened to you, child?"

"Our Lady," said Lucia, in humble victory, "has just appeared to me."

There isn't much more to be said now of Sister Lucia, the author's friend. Through her proven character, and aided by her sisterly co-operation, we know that what this book reports is true. And that, you may be sure, is the only virtue to which it dare pretend.

Sister Lucia was received into the Order of Mount Carmel on May 13, 1948, the thirty-first anniversary of Our Lady's appearance above the little oak tree, in the Cova da Iria near Fatima.

## **CHAPTER 15**

### **The Church Speaks**

During the five years which followed the apparitions, the ecclesiastical authorities maintained their reserve.

On May 3, 1922, two years after the restoration of the diocese of Leiria, Dom Jose Alves Correia published a pastoral letter from which we extract the following passages:

In this diocese of Leiria, there can be no fact connected with our Holy Religion to which our pastoral action is, or could be, indifferent.

Practically every day, but more especially on the 13th of each month, great numbers of people go to Fatima. These people are drawn from every social category, and they go there to thank Our Lady of the Rosary for the benefits they have received through her mediation. It is well known that in 1917 a series of phenomena occurred there, witnessed by thousands of people of all kinds and foretold by some unlettered children to whom, it was affirmed, Our Lady had appeared and made certain recommendations. From that time there has never ceased to be a flow of pilgrims to the place.

Of the three children who said they were favored by the apparitions, two died before our appointment to this diocese. We have questioned the remaining seer several times.

Her story and her replies are always simple and sincere; in them we can find nothing contrary to faith or morals. We ask, could this child, now 14 years old, exercise an influence which could explain such a continuous concourse of people? Could her personal prestige alone draw such multitudes of human beings? Could any precocious qualities in her attract vast crowds to herself alone? It is most improbable that such could be the case, since we are dealing with a child of most rudimentary education, and without instruction of any kind.

Moreover this child has now left her native place, and has not been seen there again; yet the people go in ever-increasing numbers to the Cova da Iria.

Could one explain it perhaps by the natural beauty or picturesqueness of the place? On the contrary, it is a lonely and deserted spot, without trees or water, far from the railway, almost lost in the serra, and destitute of scenic beauties.

Do the people go there because of the chapel perhaps? The faithful have constructed a tiny cell, so small that it is impossible to celebrate Holy Mass inside, and in the month of February of this year some unfortunate people—may Our Lady forgive them—destroyed the chapel with explosives during the night, and set fire to it.

We have advised against its reconstruction for the moment, not only with the idea of further attacks in mind, but also to test the motives which draw so many people to the place.

And yet, far from diminishing in numbers, the crowds are ever greater.

The ecclesiastical authority has delayed its decision, and the clergy have abstained from taking part in any manifestation. Only lately have we permitted low Mass to be celebrated, and sermons to be given on the occasions of the great popular pilgrimages.

The civil authorities have employed every means in their power, not excluding persecution, imprisonment, and threats of all kinds, to stop the religious movement in the place. But all their efforts were in vain, and no one can say that the Church authorities have in any way encouraged faith in the apparitions; the exact contrary is the case.

In answer to the demand implied in this letter, the bishop nominated a commission to study the case and set up the canonical inquiry, among whose members were Dr. Formigao and Dr. Marques dos Santos.

In October, 1926, the diocese of Leiria commemorated the seventh centenary of St. Francis of Assisi. The apostolic nuncio, who was present at the ceremonies, visited Batalha, and later the place of the apparitions, in company with the bishop. The first impressions of Monsignor Nicotra, communicated to the Holy See, are not on record, but what is certain is that three months later, on January 21, 1927, the privilege of a votive Mass was conceded to Fatima.

On the 26th of July of the same year, ten years, that is, after the apparitions, the bishop presided for the first time at an official ceremony in the Cova da Iria, after the erection of the Stations of the Cross on the road from Leiria to Fatima.

Before the visit of the nuncio, two prelates had visited the Cova da Iria, among them the archbishop of Evora and the primate of Braga. Later came all the bishops of the mother country and her islands and colonies, among them the bishop of Portalegre, who was the first to allow Our Lady to be invoked under her new title in his diocese. When in Rome he had verified the fact that Our Lady of Fatima was venerated there, and that the Holy Father had distributed holy pictures of her to the students of the Portuguese College. He returned full of zeal for Our Lady's new apparitions in his country, and said: "I must not be less Catholic than the pope!" He thereupon organized an imposing pilgrimage, and

was the first bishop to celebrate pontifical high Mass in the Cova da Iria. So time passed until the commission set up by Dom Jose Alves Correia announced the results of its work. The bishop then published a new pastoral letter in October 1930, which contained the following memorable paragraphs:

In virtue of considerations made known, and others which for reason of brevity we omit; humbly invoking the Divine Spirit and placing ourselves under the protection of the most Holy Virgin, and after hearing the opinions of our Reverend Advisers in this diocese, we hereby: 1. Declare worthy of belief, the visions of the shepherd children in the Cova da Iria, parish of Fatima, in this diocese, from the 13th of May to the 13th of October, 1917. 2. Permit officially the cult of Our Lady of Fatima.

Nothing further was needed. The pilgrimages to the Cova da Iria grew to immense proportions, not only from Portugal but from both hemispheres and almost every corner of the earth. Fatima was to call down upon Portugal an immensity of grace, and for Christendom at large has come to symbolize the spiritual war against Communism and to be the focal point of the new crusade.

The apostolic nuncio presided at the first Portuguese national pilgrimage on May 13, 1937, at which it is calculated some half million pilgrims were present. The second national pilgrimage took place on May 13, 1938, and was the fulfillment of a promise made by the Portuguese episcopate if Our Lady should deliver Portugal from the Communist menace which caused the terrible civil war in Spain, and which was waged in places only a few yards from her soil.

The 13th of October, 1939, marked one of the most glorious pages in the history of the great new Marian shrine. The cardinal patriarch of Lisbon presided at the pilgrimage to implore peace for Portugal.

From the 8th to the 13th of April, 1942, on the occasion of their second national congress, the Juventude Catolica Feminine (Girls' Catholic Youth Movement) organized the triumphal journey of the statue from the Chapel of the Apparitions, to Lisbon and back again to the Cova da Iria by the 13th of May, where another notable national pilgrimage took place to celebrate the silver jubilee of Fatima. In October of the same year, the Holy Father, Pius XII, broadcast in Portuguese his famous consecration of the human race to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

## **CHAPTER 16**

### **The Pope Speaks**

"Venerable Brethren and Beloved Children: Bless the God of Heaven and glorify Him before all the living, because He has shown you His mercies. Once again, in this year of grace, you climbed the holy mountain of Fatima, taking with you the heart of all Christian Portugal. There in that oasis fragrant with faith and piety, you laid at the feet of your Virgin protectress the tribute of your love, your homage and your gratitude for the immense benefits which you have lately received; you also made your humble supplication that she would continue her protection of your country at home and overseas, and defend it from the great tribulation by which the world is tormented.

"We, who as common Father of the faithful, make our own the sorrows as well as the joys of our children, unite ourselves with all the affection of our heart with you, to praise and exalt the Lord, giver of all good; to thank Him for the graces of her by whose hands you receive the divine munificence and this torrent of grace. We do this with the greater pleasure, because you, with filial affection, have desired to associate the Jubilee of Our Lady of Fatima and our own episcopal consecration, in the same Eucharistic solemnities. The Blessed Virgin Mary and the Vicar of Christ on earth are profoundly dear to the Portuguese. They have had a place in the most faithful heart of Portugal from the dawn of her nationhood; from the time when the first re-conquered lands, nucleus of the future nation, were consecrated to the Mother of God as the Terra de Santa Maria and the newly constituted kingdom was placed under the protection of St. Peter.

"The first and greatest duty of man is gratitude. There is nothing so pleasing to God as a soul grateful for the graces and benefits received; in this you have a great debt toward the Virgin Mother and patron of your country.

"In a tragic hour of darkness and distress, when the ship of the state of Portugal, having lost the guide of her most glorious traditions, and driven off her course by anti Christian and anti-national currents, seemed to be running for certain shipwreck, unconscious of present or future dangers whose gravity no one could humanly foretell; in that hour, Heaven, which foresaw these dangers, intervened, and in the darkness light shone; out of chaos order reigned; the

tempest abated and Portugal the Faithful can pick up her glorious part as a crusading and missionary nation. All honor to those who have been the instruments of Providence in this glorious enterprise!

"But glory and thanksgiving first and foremost to the Blessed Virgin, Queen and Mother of this land, which she always aided in its hours of tragedy, and in this most tragic of all, made her protection so manifest, that in 1934, our predecessor, Pius XI (of immortal memory), attested in an apostolic letter, *Ex officiosis Litteris*, to the extraordinary benefits which the Mother of God had recently accorded to Portugal.

"At that time the promise of May, 1936,[35] against the Communist peril, had not yet been made. This peril came so fearfully close, loomed up so unexpectedly, that no one could have affirmed with certainty that the marvelous peace which Portugal has enjoyed, and which in spite of everything is immeasurably less ruinous than the present war of extermination, could be maintained. Today further benefits can be added to those mentioned. The atmosphere of miracle in which Portugal is enveloped, has been transformed into innumerable prodigies, many physical, and those yet more marvelous miracles of grace and conversion which flower in this springtime of Catholic life, and which promise to bear abundant fruit. Today with even greater reason, we must confess that the Mother of God has accorded you the most real and extraordinary blessings. The sacred duty of thanksgiving is all the more incumbent upon you.

"That you have done this during the present year we are well aware. The official homage must have been agreeable to Heaven and also the sacrifices of children, the prayer and penance of the lowly and humble. The welcome given to Our Lady during her pilgrimage to the capital of the Empire during the memorable days of last April was, perhaps, the greatest demonstration of faith in the eight centuries of your history as a nation. Also the national pilgrimage of the 13th of May, heroic day of sacrifice, when in cold and rain hundreds of thousands of pilgrims came to Fatima on foot to pray, and give thanks, and make reparation. Among these the enterprise and vigorous-example of Catholic youth were apparent; there were the Eucharistic crusades of children who told the Mother of God that they had done what she desired-prayers, sacrifices, Communions in thousands—and therefore prayed: Our lady of Fatima, it now rests with you. Say but one word to your divine Son, and the world will be saved and Portugal delivered from the scourge of war. The precious crown of gold and jewels, and more important, of pure love and sacrifice which you offered to your august protectress as a symbol and sign of your eternal gratitude; this and other most beautiful demonstrations of piety which, with the zealous help of the episcopate, have been so fertile in all parishes and dioceses in this Jubilee Year,

show the gratitude of the faithful Portuguese people, and satisfy the debt which they owe to their heavenly Queen and Mother.

"Gratitude for the past is a pledge of confidence for the future. God demands our gratitude for His benefits, not because He needs our thanks, but because our recognition of His goodness prompts Him to further generosity. For this reason it is right to trust that the Mother of God, in accepting your thanksgiving, will not leave her works incomplete, and will faithfully continue to be your protectress as in days past, and preserve you from greater calamities.

"But, in order not to presume upon her goodness, it is necessary that each one, conscious of his responsibilities, should make every effort to be worthy of the singular favor of the Virgin Mother, and as grateful and loving children, deserve her maternal protection more and more.

"We must obey her maternal counsel as given at the Cana wedding, and do all that Jesus desires us to do. And she has told everyone to do penance and turn away from sin, which is the principal cause of the great chastisements which Eternal Justice sends upon the world. In the midst of this materialized and pagan world, in which the way of all flesh is corrupted, we must be the salt of the earth and the light, preserving and illuminating; we must carefully cultivate purity, and reflect the holy austerity of the Gospels in our lives; and, at all costs, as the gathering of Catholic youth affirmed in Fatima, openly live as sincere and convinced Catholics. More yet; filled with Christ, we must diffuse around us the sweet fragrance of Christ, and by assiduous prayer, particularly the daily Rosary, and by the sacrifices with which God inspires us, obtain for sinners the life of grace and eternal salvation.

"You will then most confidently invoke the Lord and He will hear you; you will call on the Mother of God, and she will answer: 'I am here.' Then the watchman of the city will not keep watch in vain, because the Lord will keep guard and defense, while the house, which is built upon a secure foundation, will be fortified by the Lord. Happy are the people whose King is God and whose Queen is the Mother of God. She will intercede with God and bless her people with peace, which is the compendium of all good.

"But you cannot be indifferent (indeed who could be so?) to the vast tragedy which torments the world. Rather, the more you are privileged by her mercies for which you give thanks today, the more securely will you place your confidence in the future under her protection, the more tragic will seem to you, the fate of so many nations torn by the greatest calamity of history.

"Terrible manifestation of divine justice! Let us adore its greatness! Yet we must not doubt the divine mercy, because Our Father in Heaven does not forget us, even in the days of His wrath.

"Now that the fourth year of war has dawned more threateningly than ever, with the spread of the conflict, now more than ever can our trust rest only in God; and, as mediator by the throne, in her name whom one of our predecessors in the First World War ordered to be invoked as Queen of Peace, let us invoke her again, for only she can help us. She whose maternal heart was moved by the ruin of your country and so wonderfully came to its aid; she, saddened by her foreknowledge of this terrible tragedy by which God's justice punishes the world, had already indicated in prayer and penance the road to salvation. She will not now deny us her maternal tenderness nor her most efficacious protection.

"Queen of the most Holy Rosary, Help of Christians, and Refuge of the human race, Conqueror in all the great battles of God, we humbly prostrate ourselves, certain of obtaining mercy and finding grace and opportune help in the present calamity. We do not presume on our merits but only on the immense bounty of your maternal heart. To you, to your Immaculate Heart, we as common father of the great Christian family, as vicar of Him to whom was given all power in Heaven and earth and from whom we receive the charge of so many souls redeemed by His precious blood; to you, to your Immaculate Heart in this tragic hour of human history, we confide, we consecrate, we deliver, not only Holy Church, the mystical body of your Jesus which bleeds and suffers in so many parts and is in so much tribulation, but also the whole world, torn by discord, burning in the fires of hate, victim of its own iniquity. May you be moved by so much ruin, material and moral, so much sorrow, so much agony of fathers, mothers, wives, brothers and sisters, of innocent children, cut off in the flower of their lives, so many bodies destroyed in the horrible carnage, so many souls tortured and agonized, so many in danger of eternal loss.

"Mother of Mercy, obtain from God both peace, and above all, those graces which can convert evil hearts in a moment of time and which prepare, conciliate, assure true peace. Queen of Peace, pray for us and give peace to the world at war, that peace for which the peoples sigh, peace in the truth, the justice, the charity of Christ! Give peace from armed warfare and in souls, so that the Kingdom of God may develop in tranquility and order.

"Extend your protection to unbelievers and those who still lie in the shadow of death; give them peace, and let the sunlight shine upon them so that they may repeat before the one Savior of the World: Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will!

"To peoples separated by error and discord, namely, those who profess your singular devotion, where there was no house that did not display your holy icon, today hidden perhaps until better days, give them peace, and lead them again to

the only flock of Christ under the true and only Shepherd. Obtain peace and complete liberty for the Holy Church of God. Stem the waves of paganism and materialism, and kindle in the faithful love of purity, the practice of a Christian life, and apostolic zeal, that the people who serve God may increase in merit and in numbers.

"Finally, as the Church and the whole human race were consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so that placing in Him all its hopes, it might have a pledge of victory and salvation, thus from today may they be perpetually consecrated to your Immaculate Heart, O Mother and Queen of the world, that your love and protection may hasten the triumph of the Kingdom of God, and that all generations of mankind, at peace with themselves and with God, may proclaim you blessed and with you may intone, from pole to pole, the eternal Magnificat of glory, love and thanksgiving to the Heart of Jesus where alone may be found truth, life and peace.

"In the hope that these our supplications and prayers may be favorably heard by the divine bounty; to you, beloved cardinal patriarch, venerable brethren and clergy, that grace from on high may ever render your zeal more fertile; to the president of the republic; to the illustrious head of the government and his ministers and authorities, that in this singularly grave and difficult hour, Heaven may continue to assist them in their activities in favor of peace and the common good; to all our beloved children in Portuguese territory at home and overseas, that the Blessed Virgin may confirm what she has deigned to operate in you; to all and each of the Portuguese as a pledge of celestial grace, we bestow with all our paternal love and affection our apostolic benediction."

Rome had recognized and blessed the apparitions to the shepherd children of Aljustrel. Henceforth Fatima was to spread throughout the world.

Some four years passed and the World War came to an end. Portugal, which had been visibly protected by the Blessed Virgin, and saved almost miraculously from the horrors which almost every other European nation suffered, sought to give public expression to the generally felt gratitude.

The women of Portugal contributed precious stones from among their jewels to make a crown for the statue which had been venerated in the Chapel of the Apparitions since the beginning.

Knowing that Pope Pius XII had followed with the greatest interest and approval the resurgence of religion in Portugal—a resurgence so obviously connected with the apparitions of Fatima—the episcopate decided to ask the Holy Father to send a legate to the solemn coronation ceremony.

On May 10, 1946, Cardinal Benedetto Aloisi Masella arrived and was received with all the honor due to a pontifical legate. His first words were

broadcast throughout the country:

"The Holy Father Pius XII, gloriously reigning, loves this country and is deeply interested in its affairs. He sends me to you, beloved Portuguese children, with the most worthy mission of crowning Our Lady of Fatima, our Mother and our Queen.

"It is a pontifical legate who has come to tell you that the Holy Father unites with you in the impressive homage which you will pay to the Blessed Virgin during these days.

"The ceremony, which will take place next Monday, will certainly draw down upon your beloved country the choicest blessings of God.

"It is for me an immense satisfaction to see the affection and regard with which you have received the legate of the Supreme Pontiff. I will, as is my duty, make known to His Holiness, the noble sentiments with which you have received me accompanied by such a great manifestation. I am sure that the Holy Father will feel the deepest satisfaction.

"At this moment I would like to express my most sincere and profound gratitude to His Excellency the President of the Republic, present in his representative, to His Eminence the cardinal patriarch, to the bishops here present, the ministers of state, the civil and military authorities, and to all of you, together with my warmest wishes for the prosperity of your beloved country.

On the 13th of May about 800,000 people awaited the Cardinal in the Cova da Iria. He arrived in company with many bishops and other eminent persons.

We find it impossible adequately to describe what we can justly call the most memorable day in the history of Christianity in Portugal. Fatima was not only the altar of Portugal, it was the altar of the world.

The words of the pope were broadcast to the pilgrims of Fatima and the Portuguese, at home and overseas, directly after the coronation ceremony:

"Venerable Brethren and Beloved Sons and Daughters: Blessed be the Lord God, Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Father of mercies and God of all consolation, who comforts us in all our tribulation. Blessed also, she whom He appointed Mother of Mercy, our Queen and our beloved Advocate, Mediatrix of all graces, and dispenser of all His treasures.

"When, four years ago, amid the turmoil of the most deadly war history has yet seen, we ascended this holy mountain in spirit with you for the first time, to join our thanks with yours for the immense benefits accorded you by Our Lady of Fatima, it was a magnificent occasion to mingle our prayers of filial confidence to the Immaculate Queen and Protector of Portugal, and pray that she would complete that which she had so marvelously begun.

"Your presence today in this sanctuary, in such immense numbers that they

can hardly be calculated, is an affirmation that the Immaculate Virgin Queen, whose maternal and compassionate heart conceived the prodigy of Fatima, has superabundantly heard your prayers.

"Ardent grateful love has brought you here and, wishing to present her with a concrete expression of it, you symbolized and condensed the same into a precious crown—fruit of so much generosity and sacrifice—which by the hand of our cardinal legate we have just placed upon the head of the miraculous statue. It is a symbol to attest your love and gratitude to your Heavenly Queen, and brings to your minds the love and benefits without number which the Virgin Mother has accorded to her Terra de Santa Maria. Eight are the centuries of benefits. The first five under the emblems of Santa Maria de Alcobaca. Santa Maria da Vitoria and Santa Maria de Belem, in the epic struggles for nationhood against the Crescent, and in the discovery of new islands and continents where your great men planted the cross of Christ side by side with the national flag. The last three centuries came under the special protection of the Immaculate One whom the monarch of the restoration, united in assembly with the whole nation, acclaimed patron of his realms and possessions, offering her his crown as an especial tribute of vassalage, with an oath to defend even to the death the privilege of her Immaculate Conception. He trusted, according to his own words, with great confidence in the infinite mercy of Our Lord, and through Our Lady, Patron and Protectress of our realms and possessions, of whom by our honor we confess ourselves to be vassals and servants, may we be defended and guarded from our enemies, with great increase of these realms to the glory of Christ our God, and to the exaltation of our Holy Catholic Roman Faith, the conversion of the heathen and the downfall of heretics.

"The Virgin most Faithful did not betray the trust which had been placed in her. It is enough to reflect on these last decades, on the crises surmounted and the benefits received. Enough to lift up the eyes and see the Cova da Iria transformed into a fountain flowing with supernatural grace; to see the physical prodigies and the even greater moral miracles, the torrents which flow from here over all Portugal and then, bursting all frontiers, spread to the whole Church and the world. How is it possible not to give thanks—or, rather, how is it possible to give thanks worthily?

"Three hundred years ago, the monarch of the restoration laid his royal crown at the feet of the Immaculate Virgin, proclaiming her Queen and Patron. Today it is all of you who act, the people of the Terra de Santa Maria, together with the shepherds of your souls and with your government.

"To the ardent prayers, to the generous sacrifices, to the Eucharistic solemnities, to the thousand acts of homage which your filial love has suggested

to you, you have added the precious crown, and with it have girded the brow of Our Lady of Fatima, here in this blessed oasis impregnated with the supernatural, where in a concrete manner you experience her marvelous protection, and where you all feel nearer her Immaculate Heart filled with immense tenderness and maternal solicitude for you and for the world. Most precious crown, symbol of love and gratitude!

"This great concourse, the fervor of your prayers, the thunder of your acclamations, the holy enthusiasm which vibrates in your hearts; and, finally, the sacred rite which in this moment of incomparable triumph has just been performed, call to our mind another multitude innumerable, other cries of homage yet more ardent, another solemn and eternal hour, the endless day of eternity when the glorious Virgin, triumphantly entering the heavenly homeland, through the nine choirs of angels, was raised even to the throne of the most Holy Trinity, who placed upon her brow the triple diadem of glory. There she was presented to the court of Heaven, seated at the right hand of the Immortal King of Ages and crowned Queen of the Universe.

"And the King saw that she was truly worthy of such honor, glory and empire, because she was more filled with grace, more holy, more beautiful, nearer to the divine, incomparably more so, than the greatest saints and sublimest angels, separately or together. This because she is mysteriously related in the order of the hypostatic union with the Blessed Trinity, with Him who is in essence the Infinite Majesty, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. She is the first-born Daughter of the Father and pure Mother of the Word, beloved Bride of the Holy Ghost, because Mother of the Divine King, of Him to whom from her maternal womb the Lord God gave the throne of David and everlasting Kingship in the House of Jacob. He alone proclaimed to have received all power in Heaven and earth, He the Son of God, decrees for His Mother all the glory, power and majesty of His Kingdom.

"Because she is associated as Mother and Helper of the King of Martyrs in the ineffable work of human redemption, she is also, forever, most powerfully associated in the distribution of grace and divine redemption. Jesus is King of the eternal ages by nature and by conquest. By Him, with Him, and under Him, Mary is Queen by grace, by her divine relationship, by conquest and by singular election. And her kingdom is vast, vast as that of her divine Son, because from her dominion none is excluded. So the Church salutes her as Lady and Queen of Apostles and Martyrs, of Confessors and Virgins, acclaims her Queen of Heaven and earth, most glorious and worthy Queen of the Universe—'Regina Caelorum': most worthy Queen of the world—'Regina mundi': the light shining amid the tears of this exile. 'Hail, Holy Queen! Mother of Mercy, Hail! Our life, our

sweetness and our hope.' It is precisely this royalty that you have known not only in the more obvious benefits, but also in the innumerable blessings of that maternal heart which you praise and proclaim today.

"The most terrible war which the world has seen, threatened for four long years to cross your frontiers, but thanks to Our Lady in her throne and heavenly watchtower, here in the center of your country, you were protected; the war was not allowed to touch you except in such ways as might the better cause you to realize the calamities from which you were preserved.

"You have crowned her Queen of Peace and of the world, which may thus be helped to find peace and to rise again from the ruins. And so this crown, symbol of love and gratitude for the past, as of faith and loyalty for the present, becomes also a message of hope for the future.

"By crowning the statue of Our Lady of Fatima, you signed, as it were, a document of faith in her supremacy, a loyal submission to her authority, a filial and constant correspondence to her love. You did yet more; you enlisted as crusaders in the conquest and re-conquest of her kingdom which is the Kingdom of God; that is to say, you bound yourselves before Heaven and earth to love her, to venerate her, to serve her, to imitate her in order that you might better serve the Divine King; and, at the same time, you bound yourselves to labor that she might be loved and venerated and served all around you, in the family, in society, in the world.

"In this decisive hour of history in which the kingdom of evil employs all its forces with devilish cruelty to destroy faith and morals and the Kingdom of God, the children of Light and children of God must employ every means, and unite wholeheartedly to defend them, that they may not be lost in a ruin incomparably greater and more disastrous than all the material ruin caused by the war.

"In this struggle there must be no neutrals, no indecisive ones. There must be an enlightened, convinced and fearless Catholicism in its faith and works, in private as in public, one hundred per cent Catholic, in the words of the great gathering of Catholic Youth in Fatima four years ago.

"In the hope that our prayers will be favorably heard by the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and that the hour of her triumph and the triumph of the Kingdom of God may be hastened; as a pledge of celestial grace, to you venerable brethren and to all your clergy, to the president of the republic and the illustrious head of the government and his ministers, to all the civil and military authorities and to all of you beloved sons and daughters, pilgrims of Our Lady of Fatima, with as many as are united to you in spirit in Portugal, at home and overseas, we bestow, with all paternal affection and love our apostolic blessing."

**The End**

## Appendix

### ***A Letter From Dr. Mendes To His Fiancée, written in September, 1917***

When I arrived at Aljustrel, at the house of Francisco's parents, I asked to speak to the children. Jacinta appeared and came up to me at once. She is very tiny, very babyish. I sat down so as to be able to see her better, and sat her down on a chest near me. Thus I was able to observe her at will. I must tell you at once that she is a darling-a little angel! She had a red handkerchief on her head, the points tied behind. It was rather torn and old, and her coat was not particularly clean, her skirt was full and wide in the local manner. I wish I could describe her face to you, but I fear I cannot do so adequately. I will try to do the best I can.

The kerchief served to emphasize her features. Her eyes are very dark and enchantingly vivacious, while her expression is really angelic, so extraordinarily sweet and kind that one is attracted in spite of oneself. She was so shy and timid that it was only with the greatest difficulty that I could make out her answers to my questions. After chatting for a while (I can imagine how you would have enjoyed it!), Francisco arrived. He carried his cap in his hand, and wore a very short jacket, the waistcoat open and showing his shirt, narrow trousers-in fact he is a little man in miniature. He has a splendid boyish face, and his expression is both lively and manly. He answered my questions with confidence, and then Jacinta, too, began to gain courage. Shortly afterwards Lucia arrived. You cannot imagine Jacinta's joy when she saw her! She seemed to dissolve into laughter, and ran to her cousin never leaving her side again. It was a charming sight to see Lucia in the middle with Francisco on one side and Jacinta on the other, very close with her head against her cousin's side.

Lucia is not very impressive to look at. I should say that she is very typical of the region. Her expression is lively, but for the rest she is ordinary-looking. She, too, was shy to begin with, but I soon put her at her ease, and she began to reply without any embarrassment. As I told you, I questioned the three of them separately. They all say the same thing without any alteration of the story. The principal thing which emerges, according to my own analysis, is that the Lady wishes the spread of devotion to the Rosary. All three children say that a Lady

appeared to them, but they do not know who she is. After six appearances, on the 13th of October she will say who she is and what she wants. The naturalness and simplicity with which they tell one all this, is extraordinary and impressive. Lucia sees the Lady, speaks to her and hears her. Jacinta sees and hears, but does not address her. Francisco neither hears nor speaks, but sees her. The difference is very interesting, is it not?

To hear these children, to see their candor, and to observe them in general, makes such a remarkable impression on one that one is led to conclude that there is something in what they say. To be with them is an intensely moving experience. It is now my conviction that we are confronted with something outside mere reason. I await the next 13th (October) with growing impatience. I repeat that, near these children, one has a sense of goodness and loses one's sense of time. There is an attraction which I cannot explain. The chief impression of the children seems to be of the Lady's beauty. The boy, to express his admiration, said that she was "perfectly sweet." I showed him your photograph and asked him if she were prettier than you. "Much more," he said, "and the Lady was all dressed in white and gold."

After this, the parents offered me some refreshments, and during that time I questioned them closely, too. They only know what the children tell them, and I don't think their knowledge goes further than mine at present. Senhora Olimpia told me of her apprehensions because of the excitement which has been caused, and added: "If we were worthy of such a thing it might be all right, but just think, sir, my brother (Lucia's father) is a tippler!" Then she told me all about the imprisonment of the children.

Later, we went with the children to the place of the apparitions, in the Cova da Iria. The little tree has been reduced almost to nothing. Round what remains there is a stone wall, and over it an arch made of greenery. On the wall are pots of sweet basil and other flowers.

When we arrived, the three children knelt down and Lucia, who was in the middle, began to recite the Rosary. The recollection and devotion with which she prayed made a profound impression on us. The "offering" of the Rosary was interesting—"for the soldiers at the war." The prayer which they say the Lady taught them is simple, and is as follows: "O Jesus, forgive us, and deliver us from the fire of Hell. Take all souls to Heaven, especially those who are most in need."

#### ***A Masonic Notice***

Citizens!

As if the pernicious propaganda of reactionaries were not enough, we now see a miracle trotted out in order further to degrade the people into fanaticism and superstition. There has been staged... an indecorous comedy in Fatima at which thousands of people have assisted, a ridiculous spectacle in which the simple people have been ingeniously deceived by means of collective suggestion, into a belief in a supposed apparition of the Mother of Jesus of Nazareth to three children jockeyed into this shameful spectacle for the commercial purposes of clerical reaction!

As if, however, the declarations of these poor little dupes who affirm they have seen a "Virgin" which, however, nobody else can see and hear, were not sufficient, it is affirmed, or rather invented, that the sun, at a certain hour on October 13, 1917, (on the eighth anniversary of the assassination of Francisco Ferrer) and in the height of the 20th century, was seen to dance a fandango in the clouds!

This, citizens, is a miserable attempt to plunge the Portuguese people once more into the dense darkness of past times which have departed never to return. The Republic and those citizens who are charged with the noble and thankless task of guiding it in the glorious paths of civilization and progress, cannot consent to the degradation of the people into fanaticism and credulity, for this would be an unpardonable failing in their primal duty not only toward their country but to humanity as a whole. It is therefore our duty to demand from the public authorities the most energetic and immediate precautions against the shameless plan by which reaction seeks to plunge the people once more into mediævalism....

What shall be our means of co-operation with those from whom we claim the action necessary for the end we envisage? An intensive and tenacious propaganda, which will raise the mentality of our citizens to the realms of truth, reason and science, convincing them that nothing can alter the laws of nature, and that the pretended miracles are nothing but miserable tricks to abuse the credulity which is the child of ignorance...

Let professors in the schools and colleges educate their pupils in a rational manner, liberating them from religious preconceptions as from all others, and we shall have prepared a generation for the morrow, happier because more worthy of happiness.

Let us, then, liberate ourselves and cleanse our minds, not only from foolish beliefs in such gross and laughable tricks as Fatima, but more especially from any credence in the supernatural and a pretended Deus Omnipotente, omniscient and omni-everything, instrument of the subtle imaginations of rogues who wish

to capture popular credulity for their purposes. Long Live The Republic! Down With Reaction! Long Live Liberty!

### ***A Letter From Lucia***

The following letter, dated July 24, 1927, was received by Senhora Maria Rosa:

My Dearest Mother,

As I know that it is a great consolation to you to receive a letter from me, I am sending you this to encourage you and help you to offer the sacrifice of my absence to God. I understand very well how much this separation must mean to you, but I think that if we had not submitted to it voluntarily, God Himself would have done it for us. Do you remember how Uncle Manuel would not let his children go out of the house and in the end God took them all? For this reason, dear mother, offer this generously to the Blessed Virgin in reparation for the offences of her ungrateful children.

I would like to ask you to give me the consolation of embracing a devotion which I know is very pleasing to God, and was asked for by our beloved Mother in Heaven. As soon as I knew about it I wanted to practice it and get everyone else to do it, too. I hope, dear mother, that you will be able to tell me that you are practicing it, and to make it known to as many people as possible. You could never give me greater happiness than this. It consists only in doing what is written on this little holy picture: the confession can be made on another day, but I think the fifteen minutes (meditation) is what will worry you the most, although it is really very easy. Who cannot think about the mysteries of the Rosary? The Annunciation of Our Lady and her humility at her great exaltation, calling herself a slave; the Passion of Our Lord who suffered so much for love of us, and Our Lady near Jesus on Calvary? Who could not pass fifteen minutes with our dear Lady, thinking about these holy things?

Goodbye, dearest mother. Try to console Our Lady in this way, and get many others to do the same. This would give me a happiness that I could not explain.

I kiss your hand, and am your most loving daughter,  
Lucia de Jesus.

### ***The Secret***

During the July apparition Our Lady confided a secret to the children, the

two first parts of which were only divulged after the Second World War had broken out. The third part, sealed and written in Lucia's own hand, is at present in the possession of the bishop of Leiria and will be opened only in 1960.

The first part of the secret concerns the vision of Hell; the second part is of universal value and interest. In it, Our Lady predicted the Second World War, which was to be preceded by a sign which Lucia recognized in the "aurora borealis" of the night of January 24, 1938. This phenomenon was witnessed in nearly all the nations of Europe, and was extensively referred to in the press.

In order to prevent this terrible scourge, Our Lady would come (she said) to ask for the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart, and for the reparatory communion of the First Saturdays. The consequence would be the conversion of Russia and peace among the nations. If her desires were not complied with, "Russia would spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church; the good will be martyred and the Holy Father will have much to suffer. Various nations will be annihilated...." The fulfillment of this prophecy is the sad reality through which humanity is living at present, and the subject is of the utmost importance and merits our close attention.

Now a question: why did Lucia wait so long before making the prophecy known?

From the interrogations and depositions of Lucia we may deduce the following: On the 10th of December, 1925, Our Lady appeared to her in her room with the Child Jesus and said: "Look, my daughter, at my heart, encircled with thorns, with which ungrateful men pierce it at every instant with their blasphemy and ingratitude. You at least, try to console me with the practice of the First Saturdays."

Lucia immediately began to make this devotion known around her. There is a letter extant[36] (dated July 24, 1927), written to her mother, Maria Rosa, in which Lucia urges the practice of the devotion that Our Lady made known to her. Lucia also declares: "From 1925, I asked that the devotion of the reparatory Communion might be propagated, together with confession, the Rosary, and a quarter of an hour's meditation, for five consecutive Saturdays. In order to realize this desire of Our Lady, I requested the help of my confessor, Father Lino, and the Reverend Mother Superior, Maria das Dores Magalhaes.

By order of Reverend Mother, I wrote my former confessor in Oporto, Monsignor Pereira Lopes. As he did not reply, I spoke of Our Lady's wish (again by order of Reverend Mother) to a Jesuit Father who was then living in Pontevedra [at present in the "Broteria" in Lisbon], Father Francisco Rodrigues.

"In 1926, when I came from Tuy, I made Our Lady's request known to my

confessor at that time, Father Jose da Silva Aparicio, superior of the Jesuits in that city (at present in Brazil, where he is Rector of the Jesuit House in Ceara Baturita). At that time Our Lady had not yet made her demand about Russia. It was two years later (1929), in the chapel of the Dorotheas, in Tuy, that our Lady came to request this consecration which was to be made by the Holy Father, in union with all the bishops of the world.

"In 1929, as Father Aparicio had relinquished his post of confessor to the community, I made Our Lady's desire about the consecration of Russia known to Father Francisco Rodrigues, who came to Tuy frequently on his way to Portugal. I also told Father Goncalves, who came to replace Father Aparicio. (He is at present superior of the Zambesi mission in the mission of Lifiege, Mozambique.) His Reverence made me write it down, and promised to work for the realization of Our Lady's wishes. He also informed the bishop of Leiria and arranged that the matter should come to the knowledge of His Holiness the Pope (Pius XI)."

[37] As we see, therefore, Lucia had repeatedly spoken of the Second World War a long time before it broke out, although her requests went unheeded. When Pius XII took the helm of the Church, the world was already on the eve of the terrible conflagration. Lucia insisted once more, not on the consecration of Russia alone, but of all the world, with an especial mention of Russia: "In 1940 I wrote to the bishop referring to the failure to fulfill Our Lady's wishes. I wrote: 'If the world only knew the moment of grace which is conceded and would do penance....' In the letter which, by order of my spiritual directors, I wrote to the Holy Father in 1940, I exposed the exact request of Our Lady and asked for the consecration of the world with especial mention of Russia."

From this the following facts emerge: Pius XI did not make the consecration which Our Lady had asked Lucia to make known. Pius XII, in his turn, did not consecrate Russia in October of 1942 in the original form which had been indicated, but as Lucia asked him in the direct letter of 1940. That is to say, he consecrated the whole world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary with an especial mention of Russia. "Especially those who profess singular devotion to you, where there is hardly a house that did not display your holy icon, today hidden perhaps, in expectation of better days."

But since 1942 the sins and sorrows of men have dampened the earth with blood and tears. The Holy Father has suffered much, the good have been trampled, and in many instances, among so many nations, evil and godless men appear, by the measure of brutal power alone, to have been victorious. The errors of Communism, so prophetically foretold Our Lady of Fatima, have spread dangerously wide.

### ***Pius XII Consecrates Russia to the Immaculate Heart: July 7, 1952***

Finally, on July 7, 1952, the Holy Father specifically consecrated the peoples of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. To these children of his paternal heart, either forbidden the practice of their chosen faith, or else, in the darkness of false propaganda, never having known the God who fixes the places of peoples and planets and stars, Pius XII concludes:

"In order that our and your prayers be more readily answered, and to give you an especial attestation of our particular affection, we, therefore, just as not many years ago we consecrated the entire world to the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mother of God, so now, in a most special way, we dedicate and consecrate all peoples of Russia to that same Immaculate Heart, in confident assurance that through the most powerful protection of Virgin Mary there may at the earliest moment be happily realized the hopes and desires which we, together with you and with all those of upright intention, have for the attainment of true peace, of fraternal concord and of rightful liberty for all:

"In the first place for the Church, so that, through the meditation of the prayer which we raise to Heaven in union with you and with all Christian peoples, the saving Kingdom of Christ, which is 'a Kingdom of truth and of life, Kingdom of sanctity and of grace, Kingdom of justice, of love and of peace.' (Preface of the Feast of the Kingship of Jesus Christ) may triumph and be firmly established in every part of the world.

"And with suppliant appeal we pray the same most loving Mother that she may assist each and every one of you in the present calamitous circumstances and obtain from her Divine Son heavenly light for your minds, and for your souls that virtue and fortitude by which, with sustaining divine grace, you may be able victoriously to overcome impiety and error.

"Given at Rome, from St. Peter's, July 7, 1952, the Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius, in the fourteenth year of our pontificate." Pius PP XII.

The common Father, in a moment of sorrow, seeing some of his children far from home and tragically separated from God, does everything possible to reunite them round himself, the faithful ones sharing in his sorrow and the others, though separated of their own free will, nevertheless remaining in his paternal heart notwithstanding their evil-doing.

The common Father of the Christian family confides, hands over, "not only Holy Church, the mystical body of Christ which bleeds and suffers in so many parts of the world, and is in so much tribulation, but also the whole world lacerated by discord, burning in great fires of hate, victim of its own iniquity."

No, Pius XII could not have better interpreted the desires of Our Lady and

we, children of the Church, must unite in a crusade of prayer and penance, that, in the Holy Father's own words, we may "hasten the triumph of the Kingdom of God so that all generations at peace among themselves and with God, may proclaim the blessedness of the most holy Virgin and with her intone from pole to pole the eternal Magnificat of glory and love and thanksgiving to the heart of Jesus, where alone may be found truth, peace and life."

***"The Miracle of the Sun". A Critical Note by Pio Scatizzi, S.J.***

In world history, outside ordinary eclipses, nothing prodigious has been recorded on the sun, with the single exception of the biblical miracle of Joshua—the day's standstill of sun and moon. This fact and no other marks Fatima with a stupendous singularity quite apart from the rest of the story.

The thousands of pilgrims, as we know, were caught in pouring rain, while gusts of wind swept the rocky hillsides. Suddenly, at midday, the heavens opened and the clouds drew back to the horizon, leaving the air pure and clear as a mirror. Such would be the case after prolonged and copious rain, when the air becomes more transparent than usual and appears to have been washed. At this moment the sun begins to pale, and it may be argued that the diminution of light could have been caused by mist or flakes of mist suspended in the air. After all those hours of rain and all that humidity, it would be logical to suspect that at least some fragments of mist would remain in the atmosphere. At first sight such doubts might be justified, since many witnesses describe the sun's disc as being opaque, silvered, or like mother-of-pearl.

Yet we can admit without hesitation that the sun looked opaque, with a well-defined rim, and at the same time prove that there was no intervening mist. In fact, we can postulate this alternative: either the mist was light or it was dense. I define a "light" mist that which exists between zero and the extreme point at which the eye cannot, with impunity, be fixed on the sun. I call a "dense" mist that which exists from this point until there is complete occultation. Now it is certain that the first alternative must be excluded, for the sun appeared like mother-of-pearl on which the vision could easily be fixed. There remains, therefore, the second alternative. But if the mist were dense, the sun's disc would not have been clearly defined. For, in fact, when a dense, damp fog veils it, there is formed in the surrounding atmosphere a kind of aureole or crown (not in the technical and astronomical sense of the word) which, so to speak, confirms the presence of mist. Yet all affirm that the sky behind the sun was perfectly clear. Now between this and a mist capable of dominating solar light, there would

seem to be an excessive difference, one may say a contradiction: the sky a clean background and at the same time a mist obscuring the sun...

This opaqueness of the sun in a clear sky was but the beginning of events, for immediately there began to radiate from its center, thousands upon thousands of colored monochromatic lights in sectors, which, in the form of spirals, began to whirl around the center of the solar disc in such a manner that the sun itself seemed to turn on itself rather like a catherine wheel, while the colored rays spread out in a centrifugal movement covering the sky as far as the curtain of clouds, and turning everything various colors as if by magic. Such a spectacle of red, yellow, green and violet rays from the sun, spreading and sweeping over the sky, cannot be explained by any know laws, nor has such a thing been seen before.

Could it have been a rainbow? Obviously not, for the simple reason that a rainbow is usually stationary. Further, the rainbow is drawn on a vertical plane opposite the sun and does not originate in the solar disc itself, but in the opposite line of vision. The eye rests on the summit of a cone on whose base rests the plane of the arch. The solar rays, which are parallel and horizontal, radiate from behind the observer, not from the front, and with a penetrating action reflect themselves once or twice in the falling drops of water, returning to the eye with the dispersion of the iris. In the case under review, on the contrary, the phenomenon is one of radiation over the whole circle of the horizon with uniform and continuous movement. Certainly there can occur other prismatic effects in the atmosphere, but they are seen, as is well known, at dawn or sunset. The air then operates as a prism, dispersing the light in various colored beams—those of the spectrum.

In the case of Fatima, it is extremely difficult to place such a phenomenon within a framework when outside the solar disc there was only limpid air without any reflecting agent, as with a rainbow, when along each monochromatic ray numberless drops of water renew the prismatic effect. In Fatima, as seen by motionless observers, the monochromatic sectors appeared to revolve and to subsist without any support. We must conclude that each colored ray was maintained autonomously, with its origin in the solar body, the air providing no means to transmission. At an altitude of 42 degrees 44'—that of the sun at midday in October—clear air, in some measure disturbed by wind, could not of itself cause a phenomenon of spectral dispersion of autonomous rotating rays.

The only comparable phenomenon is, perhaps, the aurora borealis. Professor Vercelli, in his book, *<The Air,>* quotes a description by Mr. Herdel of an exceptional aurora which was seen in the state of Iowa on the night of May 14, 1921. Taking this account as a base for comparison, I note a great divergence

between the two events. In Fatima, stable, compact, above all homogeneous. The aurora was variable, disordered, unstable. Further, it is proved that the zone of maximum occurrence of the aurora borealis is limited by a quasi-parallel running through North Cape-Northern Siberia-coast of Alaska-Hudson Bay-Labrador-Iceland and back to North Cape in Norway. We can then be nearly certain that on the 50th parallel the aurora cannot be seen—at least according to current theory.

The aurora borealis is caused by trajectories of electrons, or better, according to Vegard, by particles thrown off by the sun and diverted to the magnetic field of the earth. Then, coming in contact with the air, they give origin to the variegated lights which can be observed. The quasi-parallel trajectories which pass through the magnetic north are seen by us converging and diverging only by an effect of perspective. In substance, the aurora borealis are inherent in the terrestrial magnetic poles and thence to the <hyper-boreal> regions—hence their name.

In spite of all this, one cannot absolutely exclude the possibility of the aurora borealis being seen in low latitudes. In fact one was observed in Rome in 1938. But one fact alone distinguishes the Fatima phenomenon from this and other appearances of the aurora. The origin of the lights in Fatima was in the sun, whereas during the true aurora the sun is always invisible. Apart from this, the latitude of Fatima (39 degrees 36') is even lower than that of Rome. Also the synchronizing, revolving movement of the sectors and their three stops at regular intervals (according to witnesses) is far from the irregular, disordered movements, the disappearance and reappearance of light as described in Mr. Herdel's account. Lastly, if there had been a true aurora borealis it would have been observed in some European observatory.

It now remains to examine the third phase of the phenomenon, that is to say the movement of the sun, which appeared to detach itself from the sky and to fall on the earth in a zigzag path. It can be affirmed that such a phenomenon is outside and against all natural and astronomical laws. It appears that with this final occurrence, all doubts as to the natural origin of the events, all skepticism on our part, must be laid aside.

At this point it would be well to refresh our motives for belief in such an unheard of incident. The number and nature of the witnesses exceed all requirements for verification. With twelve such, the law justifies the execution of a man. In this case, eyewitnesses numbered some 70,000.

To resume our study: first, we have the rotation of the sun and the various colors; secondly, a movement outside the normal daily path of the sun in the heavens. In the first case there would be a normal admiration such as would be excited by a first view of an aurora borealis. There would be no cause for terror.

Yet, suddenly, without the intervention of any new factor, the multitude is seized with terror as if menaced by a cataclysm. Everyone feels threatened by imminent catastrophe. There is a sensation that the sun is about to fall on the earth; that it is being torn from the cosmic laws of its eternal path. Hence the invocations, the prayers, the cries of affliction, as in a universal cataclysm.

Observe well the second phase. It is not religious hysteria, nor a species of pentecostal fervor. It is sheer panic in the presence of Him who alone can dominate the forces of the universe. Contemporary accounts will show that it was not a case of suggestion, but that an objective vision was the cause of the panic which, when it had passed, left everyone perfectly calm, contented even, at having witnessed a prodigy which had been exactly foretold and anxiously awaited. How also could everyone have seen the danger pass at one and the same moment?

Of the historical reality of this event there can be no doubt whatever. That it was outside and against known laws can be proved by certain simple scientific considerations.

The "movement" of the sun is relative to the earth's own. The orbit of the latter is nearly an ellipse of extremely small ex-centricity. The daily transitional movement of the earth—even with its velocity of 18 miles a second—is projectively imperceptible. Much less would it be so during the ten minutes' duration of the phenomena ten minutes are sufficient, as was the case in Fatima, for a generic qualitative observation, they would not suffice for the observation with the naked eye of a solar dislocation which can be known only in relation to the distances of the zodiac constellations.

Conclusion: The above-mentioned solar phenomena were not noted in any observatory. Impossible that they should escape the notice of so many astronomers and indeed the other inhabitants of the hemisphere. It must then be admitted that there is no question of an astronomical or meteorological phenomenon as we have already said. We are thus confronted with an inescapable dilemma. Either all the observers in Fatima were collectively deceived and erred in their testimony, or we must suppose an extra-natural intervention. Given the indubitable reference to God, and the general context of the story, it seems that we must attribute to Him alone the most obvious and colossal miracle of history.

### ***Lucia's First Holy Communion***

A detailed account of Lucia's first Communion appears in her memoirs. It

took place when she was six years old, three years after the decree of Pope Pius X admitting small children to Holy Communion, and seems to have been attended by certain supernatural features and a promise of future sanctity. It is also interesting in the light of later events that her first confession was made to Father Cruz, S.J., who later became renowned for his sanctity, and was to be one of the most celebrated personages in Portugal, like Lucia herself.

The parish priest had decided that Lucia was too young to receive Holy Communion, although she had responded well to the catechism. Father Cruz, who happened to be giving a triduum, saw her in tears and, after examining her, personally intervened and secured a reversal of the decision of the parish priest, expressing his opinion that the little girl was perfectly ready and able to receive Our Lord. After her confession she knelt before Our Lady's statue and (instructed perhaps by her confessor) prayed earnestly: "Please keep my heart pure for God." It seemed to her at that moment that the statue smiled upon her and gave her a visible sign of assent. Again, before Mass on the following day, she knelt before the statue and prayed: "Make me a saint." Once again she seemed to have a supernatural sign and certainty that her prayer had been heard. "I do not know," she writes, "whether the facts I have written about my first Communion were a reality or a little girl's illusion. All I know is that they had a great influence in uniting me to God all my life." When she received Our Lord she felt an "unalterable serenity and peace" and kept saying in her heart, "Lord, make me a saint. Keep my heart always pure—for You alone." And she heard distinctly the reply: "The grace that I grant thee today will remain living in thy soul producing fruits of eternal life." Although the Mass was very late in finishing, Lucia could not eat when she arrived home. Her spiritual experience had almost abstracted her from her senses and those around her noticed her recollection and absorption.

### *The Seventh Apparition*

Though no attempt has been made in this volume to describe the fulfillment of Our Lady's promise to return to the Cova da Iria a seventh time, it can be said with certainty that the apparition did take place. It occurred June 18, 1921, Lucia's last day in Aljustrel before leaving for the convent school at Vilar. That evening, having left her home, and paying a last visit to the Cova da Iria, she is said to have seen Our Lady standing at a spot now occupied by the lower steps of the basilica.

I wrote to Sister Lucia about this, but have not received a reply. I have,

however, been assured by a priest very close to Lucia that she has confirmed the happening. J. D.

### ***Erroneous Version of First Apparition***

Several books on Fatima, including an early version of the author's own, include with their accounts of the first apparition a sequence in which Francisco does not at first see the mysterious "Lady" with whom Lucia is speaking.

"I don't see anything!" he is alleged to have complained. "Throw a stone at it, Lucia, to see if it is real!"

Lucia does not throw the recommended stone, but the Lady, in this version, advises Lucia, in regard to her doubting cousin, "Let him say the Rosary, and in this way he too will see me."

Meanwhile Jacinta, worried for the welfare of anyone having journeyed all the way from Heaven, says to Lucia, "Ask the Lady if she is hungry. We still have some bread and cheese."

Francisco, by this account, is also worried by the errant behavior of the sheep, which have wandered into someone's garden, in another section of the Cova da Iria, there to consume forbidden peas. His concern is based on knowledge that his father will punish him for this, but his fear is quickly relieved by Lucia's assurance that the Lady has guaranteed the sheep will not eat the peas.

Exactly how all this crept into the record, I do not know, but when I showed it to Sister Lucia in the first Portuguese version of my book, she very helpfully took a pencil and crossed the whole thing out.

By Lucia's personal account they were too entranced in the wondrous beauty of their Lady to entertain the least thought of the sheep. Further, there is no support for the assumption that Francisco failed to see the Lady from the first moment of her appearance.

## Notes

[1] A Letter From Dr. Mendes To His Fiancée, written in September, 1917,  
See appendix.

[2] The title, or designation, Ti, is a customary form of address in the country villages of Portugal, appropriate to a man who is of the village and its traditions; it is not a form held suitable to men of wealth and education, or, for that matter, touring Americans.

[3] My years in the priesthood have more than once afforded an opportunity for the study of pseudo-mysticism, and I can affirm with every confidence that false mystics and Sister Lucia are strangers far apart.

[4] In Portuguese villages people are more commonly known by their nicknames than their real ones.

[5] *Lucia's First Communion*, see appendix above.

[6] The fact that Francisco's parents differ from Lucia in this measuring of his spirit and fortitude is not surprising - how children behave before parents and how they behave before others is oftentimes quite different.

[7] Senhora Teresa is the mother of nine children, the oldest being approximately twenty-one. In this part of Portugal the crowding of so many heirs to Heaven under a single roof is still considered to be far more a blessing than a burden. It is rare to find a family with less than four or five dividends of marriage in a community where all the sacraments appear to be honored by love and obedience.

[8] This prayer spoken by the angel to children who could not read or write, nor by any means other than memory retain what they had heard was so indelibly etched in their minds that the verbatim original remains: Meu Deus, eu creio, adoro, espero e amo-Vos. Peco-Vos, perdao para os que nao creem, nao adoram, nao esperam e nao Vos amam.

[9] *The Seventh Apparition*, See appendix above.

[10] This is the first secret of the Fatima apparitions that Lucia revealed to her confessor. "On December 17th, 1927," she has disclosed, "I prayed to Our Lord, asking how I could be obedient to my confessor in regard to certain graces if, among them, was the secret of Our Lady. Jesus, in a clear voice, permitted me to hear these words: My daughter, write what your confessor commands you to

write, and also all that the Blessed Virgin revealed in the apparitions in reference to devotion to her Immaculate Heart. The rest of the secret you must continue to conceal."

[11] Another report from our friend, Maria da Capelinha, may illuminate our Lady's relations with the children of Aljustrel. "One day," she said, "I met Jacinta and Lucia and asked Lucia why it was that Our Lady spoke only with her, but not with her cousin. 'It's because Jacinta's tongue-tied,' Lucia told me 'If she would only speak to Our Lady, I know Our Lady would speak to her. Jacinta then looked at us both, and all she did was smile."

[12] If Our Lady did not cure or enrich Maria's son John, she at least ensured him a livelihood, since he is today sacristan of the Chapel of the Apparitions in the Cova da Iria.

[13] This is the secret which was to cause the children so much suffering. Only after the death of Francisco (1919) and of Jacinta (1920) did Lucia reveal the first and second parts. As to the third part, only in 1960 shall we know what the Blessed Virgin told the children of Aljustrel. It is in the possession of the bishop of Leiria, written by Lucia, and placed in a sealed envelope. "It may seem," she said later, "that I should have revealed these things sooner than I did and that their value would have been doubled. It might have been so if God had wished me to appear before the world as a prophetess, but such was not His Will. If it had been, He would not have ordered me to keep silence but to speak. I think Our Lady only wished to make use of me to remind the world of the necessity of the avoidance of sin, and of reparation for so many offences against God by means of prayer and penance."

[14] By Lucia's interpretation, this refers to the souls in the greatest danger of condemnation. The prayer itself, in Portuguese, is as follows: O meu Jesus perdoai-nos, livrai-nos do fogo do inferno; levai todas as almas para o ceu, especialmente as que mais precisarem.

[15] Lucia recognized the sign of God in the extraordinary "aurora borealis" which illuminated the night sky on January 24-25, 1938. She was convinced that the world war was about to break out and did everything possible to hasten forward the recommendations of Our Lady. But she was to be convinced that the hour of mercy had not yet arrived.

[16] This conversation among the three children is a literal extract from Lucia's Memoirs.

[17] Perhaps the flight of the multitudes before the invading armies and the aerial bombardments of World War II. Perhaps the concentration camps of then and now?

[18] Ti Marto is mistaken on this point. Lucia was in fact questioned by the

parish priest at the request of the mayor, according to the Canonical Inquiry. "Who taught you to say the things which you are saying?" Father Ferreira asked. "The Lady I saw in the Cova da Iria."

"Those who go about spreading such lies as you are doing will be judged and will go to Hell if they are not true. More and more people are being deceived by you."

"If people who lie go to Hell then I shall not go to Hell, because I am not lying and I say only what I saw and what the Lady told me. And the people go there because they want to; we do not tell them to go."

"Is it true that the Lady told you a secret?"

"Yes, but I cannot tell it. If your Reverence wants to know it, I will ask the Lady, and if she allows me to, then I will tell it to you." The mayor said: "These are supernatural things. Let us go." He got up and went out of the room, obliging the children to enter the carriage in the presence of their fathers.

[19] That all this was not an empty threat is indicated by the fact that the Rev. Ferreira, priest of Fatima, felt obliged to publish in the Ordem, of Lisbon, and the Ouriense, of Ourem, a defense of his attitude. He wrote a letter to the editor entitled: *To Believers And Non-Believers*: Reluctantly as a Catholic priest, I beg to make known and to declare the following before all those who may know or hear rumor - infamous and damaging to my reputation as parish priest—that I was an accomplice in the imprisonment of three children in my parish who assert that they have seen Our Lady. I make this statement on the authority of the parents and for the satisfaction of the 5,000 to 6,000 persons who came many miles and with great sacrifice to see and speak with them. I deny this infamous and insidious calumny, and declare before the whole world that I had nothing whatever to do, directly or indirectly, with this impious and sacrilegious action. The mayor did not confide his intentions to me. And if it was providential—which it was—that he acted secretly and without any resistance on the part of the children, it was no less than providential that the excitement to which this diabolical rumor gave rise was calmed, or the parish would certainly have had to mourn the death of its priest as an accomplice in the crime. That the devil did not succeed in this, was due certainly to the Virgin Mother. The mayor, after a protracted interrogation in their own houses, had the children brought to mine under the pretext of collecting more accurate information about the secret which they had refused to reveal to anyone. Then, at the time when he judged opportune, he ordered them into the carriage, and telling the parents that he was taking them to the Cova da Iria, in fact took them to Vila Nova de Ourem. Why did he choose my house from which to act? In order to escape the consequences of his action? In order that the people should riot, as they did, and accuse me of

complicity? Or for some other reason? I do not know. I only know that I deny all responsibility in the matter, and leave judgment to God. No one can prevent a work of God. Thousands of eyewitnesses can attest that the presence of the children was not necessary for the Queen of Heaven to manifest her power. They themselves will attest to the extraordinary phenomena which occurred to confirm their faith. But now, it is not a trio of children, but thousands of people of all ages, classes and conditions who have seen for themselves. If my absence from the Cova, as parish priest, gave offence to believers, my presence as a witness would have been no less objectionable to unbelievers. The Blessed Virgin has no need of the parish priest in order to manifest her goodness and the enemies of religion need not tarnish their benevolence by attributing the faith of the people to the presence or otherwise of the parish priest. Faith is a gift of God and not of the priests. This is the true motive of my absence and apparent indifference to such a sublime and marvelous event. This is why I have not replied to the thousand questions and letters, which have been directed to me. The enemy is not asleep, but like a roaring lion. The apostles were not the first to announce the Resurrection. I abstain from any narration of the above-mentioned facts on account of the length of this letter, and because the Press will most certainly have given its own accounts. I am, yours faithfully, Fr. Manual Marques Ferreira.

[20] This account of the children's detention has been taken from various sources, including contemporary witnesses and Lucia's Memoir I.

[21] Lucia and Francisco were not the only ones to observe these phenomena. Lucia's sister, Teresa, returning from Moita with her husband, has told us this: "We were just coming into Fatima when we noticed the air was fresher. The sun looked yellowish mostly, but it was taking on various colors. Looking at my husband, and seeing the colors reflected on the white of his shirt, I said to him, "Maybe we have been wrong all the time." He said to me, "What's that?" and I explained it to him. I said, "Don't you see that everything is like it was six days ago at the Cova da Iria?" When we got as far as the parish church in Fatima, this remarkable thing disappeared. Later we came to know it was just at that time that Our Lady appeared to the children at Valinhos

[22] Dr. Formigao had in mind the possible "suggestive" influence of this book.

[23] One of the slips which Lucia occasionally makes and which are easily explained, as we have said, by the continual and ceaseless interrogations which everybody considered they had the right to impose.

[24] Lucia did not wish to blame her mother who had said: "What does it matter to Our Lady if you can read or not!"

[25] See appendix above.

[26] Father Lacerda regretfully recognized the same fact: "Jacinta's mother did not receive me with open arms. At my request for permission to question her daughter she hesitated, and only after I had told her that I wanted to tell the soldiers in France about the apparitions of Our Lady did she consent. Senhora Olimpia had every justification for her attitude. So many people had appeared in Aljustrel on the pretence of seeing the children that they no longer knew how to reply. Some people had been there to try and surprise the children into contradictions. The children's father took up the same attitude and reproached us, as priests, for doubting the children's word."

[27] "On this occasion," says Maria da Capelinha, "they took the lanterns, the table and the arch for their parody in Santarem. They thought they had taken the tree but they made a mistake and took another." Lucia also refers to the event: "Meanwhile the government did not leave things where they stood. In the place of the apparitions people had put an arch and lanterns which were kept alight. One night some men came in a motor car to tear down the arch and to cut the tree where the apparitions had taken place. In the morning the news spread rapidly and I ran to see if it was true. Imagine my joy when I saw that those wretched men had made a mistake and instead of taking the real tree (which was by then nothing but a small trunk) they had cut one of the saplings nearby. I asked Our Lady to forgive them, and I prayed for their conversion."

[28] While mother and daughter were in the waiting room, a certain Dona Maria de Castro, who was a patient of Dr. Lisboa, came to see Jacinta. This lady was a believer in the apparitions of Fatima, and held Jacinta in great esteem, and she at once asked her to pray to Our Lady for her. But Jacinta gave no reply and looked at her so sadly, that Dona Maria went away disheartened. She left a fifty escudo bank note with the little girl, who at once handed it over to the superior of the house, Mother Godinho. The nun, however, did not wish to accept it. "Give it to your mother," she advised Jacinta. "No, it's for you, because I shall give you a lot of trouble." Later Mother Godinho asked Jacinta why she had not replied to Dona Maria when she asked for prayers. "I did pray," was the answer, "but I didn't say so that day because I was afraid of a promise I might not keep. I was in such pain that I was not sure I would remember her request."

[29] Is not this an allusion to the Communist invasion (at the time of the Spanish war) by which the nation was menaced; and which the Portuguese Episcopate implored Our Lady to avert from their country? A question: Has the necessary reparation been made? We may note in the first place the intensification of religious life in Portugal, and the characteristic note of penance which marks the Fatima Pilgrimages. We may also cite the walking pilgrimage of 10,000 young men from Lisbon, and the triumphal reception of the statue of

Our Lady in the capital (from Dr. Galamba's Jacinta). It will be remembered that the Portuguese bishops led a great national pilgrimage to Fatima to thank Our Lady for deliverance from the Communism which threatened at the time of the Spanish Civil War."

[30] One nurse who looked after Jacinta, and whom we had the opportunity to interview, has told us that during this period she purposely stood in the place allegedly occupied by Our Lady at Jacinta's bedside. "She said nothing," the nurse recalled "but there was such an expression of pain on her face that I couldn't endure remaining there any longer."

[31] In Portugal not more than twenty-four hours may elapse between death and burial.

[32] Senhor Almeida later wrote: 'I seem to see Jacinta still, looking like a little angel. In her coffin she seemed to be alive - her lips and cheeks were a beautiful pink. I have seen many corpses, large and small, but I have never seen anything like that. The beautiful perfume which the body exhaled could not be explained naturally, and the hardest skeptic could not doubt it. One remembers the smell which so often makes it repugnant to remain near a corpse and yet this child had been dead three days and a half, and the smell of her body was like a bouquet of flowers....'

[33] Senhor Julio Lopes, who was at that time secretary to Arthur Santos, confided to us: "As the rumor of the proposed pilgrimage began to spread around, Arthur exclaimed: 'I must put a stop to' this ridiculous fairy tale!' I replied: 'You won't be able to do anything!' He then said: 'Not a soul shall get in there; they can't do anything against brute force!'

[34] *The Secret*, See appendix above.

[35] A promise made collectively by the bishops of Portugal to Our Lady to organize a national pilgrimage to Fatima to ward off the threat of Communism to their country.

[36] *A Letter From Lucia*, See appendix above.

[37] Lucia does not remember the exact date on which this message was delivered to the Holy Father but recalls that her confessor told her that it had been graciously received and would be taken into consideration.